



KNIFE BIN BID TO STOP STABBINGS

Report by Richard Guttridge

A KNIFE surrender bin will be placed in Dudley as police take action following a series of stabbings in the borough.

Police chiefs are to place the bin in a town centre location after the borough was shocked by three stabbings in eight days last month.

There are already bins in place in Wolverhampton and Sandwell and another is planned for Walsall to encourage the collection and destruction of weapons.

Police believe the bins are useful tools in helping to tackle knife crime, which gives people the opportunity to help rid the streets of knives without fear of recrimination.

Mansoor Mahmood, aged 24, died after being knifed in Brierley Hill High Street. It came after stabbings in Lower Gornal and Sedgley.



Victim - Mr Mahmood

More than 140 weapons - including axes, swords and knives - have been recovered from the latest opening of surrender bins in the West Midlands.

Police revealed the secure bin on Dunstall Road in Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton, had the highest number of dumped weapons with 54 blades.

Zombie

These included three swords and the kind of vicious 'zombie' knife that has been recently outlawed

Mr Jamieson said the key to tackling knife crime was getting the message through to children when they are at a young age that carrying knives was unacceptable.

He said: "We are determined to take tough action against the sort of people who are carrying knives. The really sad thing is that most of the offenders are boys in their teens and the victims are boys in their teens and aged up to 24."

"We can't arrest our way out of the problems. A lot of boys who find themselves in problems lack a father figure and find themselves drifting into gangs."

"We need to look at children when they are nine to 13, and educate them and to get them to understand the consequences of carrying knives."

"The very simple message is if you carry a knife the chances are someone will use a knife on you."

ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR GAMER ON GADGET SHOW



Nick Browne, of the Vintage Gamer shop in Halesowen, who is to have a major role in Channel 5's The Gadget Show at Christmas

A RETRO video game specialist from the Black Country will feature on Channel 5's Gadget Show over the festive period.

Nick Browne, owner of Vintage Gamer shop, was approached by the team behind The Gadget Show. They then spent over two hours filming him and around his shop in Halesowen.

The Gadget Show, now in its 24th series, puts both old and new gadgets through their paces.

The team filmed Nick discussing which forgotten gaming gems could be hidden away

in people's lofts and also took a look at all things Pokemon Go. They also spoke on the advances in console gaming along with some of Nick's own tips and advice, which will be screened on December 21.

Nick said: "It was very surreal to have them come over and film. I think it'll be a little cringe to watch myself but it'll be great as I've never been on TV before."

"The presenter, Jason (Bradbury), asked me what prized possessions I've got that's rare and expensive so I told him about a game I've got which is ridiculously rare. The game

was originally for the Nintendo NES console and is called Duck Tales, based on the Disney film.

"There's only 150 numbered games in the world and 20 that aren't numbered as they were the first original batch. To find one is ridiculously hard but I've got three - one numbered and two from the original batch. I'm on the hunt for more even though the last one I bought cost me nearly £1,500."

Nick opened his first gaming shop in 2013 before moving to his current premises in 2014 which is home to a video game arcade.

COURT

Driver charged after passenger is killed

A 22-year-old man has been charged with causing death by dangerous driving after one of his passengers was killed in a collision on Saturday.

Liam Ellis, from Wiseley Way in Quinton, appeared at Birmingham Magistrates Court on Monday in connection with the crash on Adams Hill, Bartley Green, which happened just before 3am. He was remanded into custody ahead of his next appearance at Birmingham Crown Court on December 23.

A woman in her 20s, a rear seat passenger, was confirmed dead at the scene.

DEATH

Body of missing pensioner found

THE body of a missing pensioner has been found in a fishing pool.

West Midlands Police had been searching for 75-year-old William Jewkes from Sedgley after he was last seen opening a church for a mother and toddler group.

On Friday police confirmed that his body had been found in the pool on Parkes Hall Road, Dudley, at 12.28pm. His death is not being treated as suspicious and Mr Jewkes' family has been informed.

FOOTBALL

Glassboys ready to make FA Cup history

THERE will be a capacity crowd at the War Memorial ground in Ambecote on Sunday for Stourbridge's FA Cup second round tie with Northampton Town.

The Glassboys will play League One outfit Northampton at 2pm as they aim to reach the third round proper for the first time in their history. More than 2,000 supporters will watch Gary Hackett's side take on the Cobblers with the potential reward of a lucrative glamour tie in the next round.

More than 400 away fans will be making the trip from the East Midlands.

● Sport - see page 40

INSIDE

MIKE'S TRIP INTO THE PAST



PAGE 12

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2 CONTENTS

MARK ANDREWS	6
LETTER	7
MEMORY LANE	12
LIFESTYLE	14
THE FAST TICKET	23
PROPERTY	31
MOTORING	36
SPORT	39 & 40
CONTACT US	

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Road concern raised after fatal crash

A STRETCH of road in Shropshire where a Black Country motorcyclist died is to come under scrutiny after a coroner vowed to write to highways chiefs about it.

Halesowen motorcyclist Jason Gardener, a welder, died when his Suzuki motorbike collided with a Toyota Rav 4 on the Stourbridge Road between Six Ashes and Bridgnorth.

John Ellery, coroner for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, said he would write to Shropshire Council's traffic safety manager at the conclusion of an inquest on the fatal accident on the A458.

Mr Gardener, a 43-year old welder, who lived at Hawne Lane, crashed at the junction of the

Stourbridge Road with Woodyard Lane on May 15. He died of multiple injuries, the inquest held at Shrewsbury was told last week.

Mr Ellery heard from witnesses that the day had been clear and visibility good on the stretch of road.

Dangerous

Matthew Timmins, from Perton, near Wolverhampton, had been behind the Rav 4 as it prepared to pull out of Woodyard Lane onto the A458.

"I know how dangerous that junction is so I hung back," said Mr Timmins. "Just as he was turning right, that was when the accident occurred."

"I heard a huge noise and saw the bike hit the car and spin in a clockwise motion down the road. That junction is horrendous."

In summing up, Mr Ellery said: "This is a junction that is a matter of concern. I will write to Brian Williams, traffic safety manager at Shropshire Council, about this."

"The appropriate conclusion is one of a road traffic collision."

The driver of the car, John Launchbury, declined to give evidence at the inquest.

Collision investigator, PC Chris Duffer, said that it was impossible to say how fast Mr Gardener been travelling prior to the accident.

Every donation helps to make a difference

"EVERY donation matters" – that's the message from staff and volunteers busily working behind the scenes at the Black Country Food Bank.

The charity's warehouse in Brierley Hill is where every item donated is logged and stored before it is delivered to its 19 distribution centres. People can visit these centres to exchange vouchers for three days of emergency food supplies.

Around 40 volunteers work sorting donations and ensuring they are delivered to the different centres depending on demand. Every item is checked and the best before date written on it to ensure supplies are used in the right order.

"The biggest crime we commit is to waste food so it's important that we know when it has to be used by," said volunteer Kelvin Bates.

Any donation which must be used urgently is passed on to The Good Shepherd Ministry in Wolverhampton which serves hot meals to those in need.

Within the warehouse, items are stored by food type to make it easier for supplies to be gathered and for monitoring of stock.

"It's not as much as it looks. The cereals might just be enough for a few weeks and the whole lot would run out within a few months without further donations," said Mr Bates who has been volunteering for the charity for 11 years.

"We are grateful for everything we receive, every donation matters and makes a difference."

Crisis

Last year, the warehouse distributed 36,000kg of food across the Black Country which had been donated from the community including 70 churches and 50 schools.

It's not just food. The charity also hands out toiletries and cleaning supplies.



The volunteer team: Jen Williams, Mike Crook, Niall Jackson and Kelvin Bates at the Black Country Food Bank

The charity provides crisis provision to an average of 1,400 people per month. Of those around 40 per cent are children

The main issue people face is benefits being delayed or stopped, which leaves them turning to the food bank for help. It partners with around 250 local agencies in an effort to ensure that food goes those in genuine need.

Mr Bates, aged 68, from Brierley Hill, said the charity was well-supported in the community.

"This job restores your faith in humanity. It's wonderful to see what people have given to help people they have never met and are never likely to.

"We often hear about the bad things that are happening in the community – we don't tend hear about all of the good things. This is the good that is happening every day," he added.

Jen Williams, aged 67, from Kingswinford, has been volunteering for 12 months, having previously worked at Debenhams and as a hair-dresser.

She said: "I was amazed at how much this food was needed. I had no idea how hard some people were finding it just to get enough to eat."

"I love volunteering here because I know I'm doing my bit to help those less fortunate."

The Black Country Food Bank is one of the good causes which will benefit from the Express & Star's Feed A Family This Christmas appeal.

With the help of readers The Chronicle's sister newspaper wants to provide families with Christmas treats they would otherwise not be able to afford as well, as supplying them with store-cupboard essentials to keep them going through the festive season.

As part of the Feed A Family campaign, the Express & Star will also be supporting food banks in Wolverhampton, Smethwick, Walsall and Cannock.

Etheridge is given top UKIP post by new boss

EURO MP and Sedgley councillor Bill Etheridge was this week appointed to UKIP's top team just hours after new leader Paul Nuttall replaced Nigel Farage.

Mr Etheridge, an MEP and and Dudley Council member, is his party's new defence spokesman.

He said: "I am excited and it is a great honour."

"It is an area where the party will make a big difference as it is our policy for a big increase in spending. I'm a big believer of the phrase 'peace through strength'."

Mr Etheridge pulled out of the UKIP leadership contest to back Mr Nuttall, a personal friend. Merseyside Mr Nuttall won with more than 60 per cent of the vote from UKIP members.

Mr Etheridge said the party will be targeting the Black Country and Labour voters.

"Paul really sees the Black Country and the West Midlands as somewhere that has been let down by the traditional parties," he said.

"As a region it overwhelmingly backed the campaign to leave the EU. Those people are looking for a voice and UKIP will be that voice for them."

The election was the second in a few months, following previous victor Diane James's decision to step down after just 18 days in the job.

Mr Nuttall took 62.6 per cent of the vote, beating former deputy chairwoman Suzanne Evans, and ex-soldier John Res-Evans.

90-year-old dies in road accident

A 90-YEAR-OLD man was knocked over and killed on the busy A448 near Wombourne, just yards from his home. Two men have been arrested in connection with the incident.

Frederick Dudley, of Bearnett Drive, Upper Penn, was reportedly struck by a black VW Scirocco travelling towards Himley on the Stourbridge Road, near the Miller & Carter restaurant.

A 27-year-old from Wolverhampton and a 25-year-old from Kingswinford have been arrested over offences connected with the incident and given bail.

Eyewitness Paul Smith, of Lloyd Drive, comforted Mr Dudley as he lay dying in the road. He said the victim had just got off a bus. Witnesses should call Staffordshire Police on 101 quoting incident 570.

Five Guys arrive at Merry Hill centre

POPULAR burger chain Five Guys has opened at Merry Hill shopping centre, creating 35 jobs. It is the American restaurant's first outlet in the Black Country, after arriving at Birmingham's Bullring. Five Guys Burger and Fries first opened in the USA 30 years ago.

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Location of new leisure centres is key factor

TWO new leisure centres will need to be within easy reach of everyone in Dudley borough, the council's regeneration boss says.

Controversial plans to close the borough's three existing centres and replace them with two new facilities were revealed last month.

Dudley Council regeneration boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said that he expected one of the centres to be in Dudley, which meant it was important that the other, that is likely to be in the south of the borough, could be accessed easily.

If that was the case, it would mean either Stourbridge or Halesowen would be left without a leisure centre.

Hundreds have signed a petition calling for the plans to be scrapped.

Mr Ahmed said: "If we go from three to two, which is likely, we have got to make sure there is connectivity and they are easily accessible."

Struggle

"It needs to be within 20 minutes commuting time. Anything beyond that and you struggle to get people to go."

In response to the council's move, former councillor and cabinet member for environment and leisure, Tracy Wood, set up the The Save Our Leisure Centres campaign. So far 1,400 people have backed it.

"I'm going to continue building the campaign and putting pressure on the council to prevent the leisure centres from closing," she added.

Councillor Ahmed said no decision had been made yet and a full report would be going to the council's next cabinet meeting.

GP accused of sex attacks on patients

A GP has been accused of sex attacks on three of his patients, police have revealed.

Dr Jaswant Rathore has been charged with 10 counts of sexual assault and will appear before Walsall magistrates on December 23.

West Midlands Police said last night charges against the 58-year-old, of Ploughmans Walk, Wall Heath, related to alleged offences against three of his patients.

Dr Rathore, who works at a surgery in the Dudley area, previously served as Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) clinical executive for finance and business intelligence.

Dr David Hegarty, chair of Dudley CCG, confirmed on Friday that Dr Rathore was no longer a board member at the CCG. He left the board on December 31, 2015.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "Specialist officers are supporting the victims and we would urge anybody else with information to call 101 or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111."

Landmark town centre building for sale



Churchill House in Halesowen

PROMINENT town centre premises could be set for major investment after being put on the market for around £800,000.

Churchill House in Halesowen has a whole floor of vacant space which could prove attractive to investors.

The building on Hagley Street covers three floors, including a parade of three ground floor shop units, and four flats.

The current businesses in the premises are Bloore & King estate agents, Boots opticians and a shop and cafe run by sight loss charity Beacon. They

have been told not to expect any impact on their businesses from the sale of the freehold.

According to the property listing on property auctioneers Allsop, the property currently generates £77,220 per year in rent.

It will go up for sale in an auction being held by Allsop in London on Tuesday, December 6.

The building is situated in a prominent pedestrianised town centre position in the heart of the shopping area.

The building sits between the multi-storey car park on Pool Road and

the main entrance to The Cornbow Shopping Centre.

In June it was decided by Dudley Council that planning permission wasn't needed for a change of use of the second floor from office units to residential use.

The property is lot 101 at the commercial auction being held from 10am at The Berkeley, Wilton Place, Knightsbridge, London. For further information visit www.auction.co.uk/commercial/home.asp or call 0207 543 6876.

Gunman gets 21 years for murder of teenager

A MAN who shot dead a teenager as he sat in a parked car and his Black Country accomplice have been locked up.

Disharn Downie, of Bartley Green, and Dean Silvera, of St Giles Close, Rowley Regis, are both behind bars following a trial over the murder of 18-year-old Ken-ichi Phillips.

Downie was sentenced to a minimum of 21 years at Birmingham Crown Court on Monday after he was found guilty of murder, as well as attempted murder and attempted grievous bodily harm in relation to the other two occupants of the car. The 18-year-old was sentenced for possession of firearms with intent to endanger life. He was also given five years for a separate charge of robbery that took place few weeks before the killing.

Silvera, 37, was cleared of murder, attempted murder, attempting grievous bodily harm and two counts of possession of a gun, but was found guilty of assisting an offender. He was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison.

Silvera was jailed after a jury found that he had driven one or more gunmen from the scene of the crime.

On March 17 Downie was part of a group that opened fire on a Seat Ibiza on St Mark's Crescent in Birmingham city centre. One of the bullets struck 18-year-old front seat passenger Mr Phillips in the jaw and neck. The other two occupants got out of the vehicle unharmed.

Alleyway

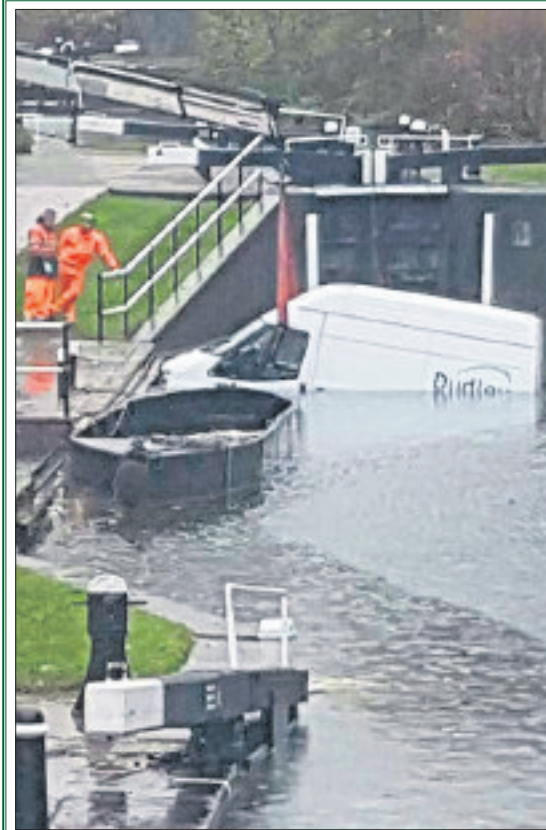
All three men ran from the car after but, due to the injuries he had sustained, Mr Phillips collapsed in an alleyway and died at the scene.

Witnesses told of a car speeding away from the scene straight after the shooting. That vehicle was identified as a Mazda 2 following a CCTV trawl and enquiries led officers to Downie's address in the Gravel Bank area.

Judge Patrick Thomas QC told Downie: "Whether it was your bullet or that of the other man does not matter, the jury has found that the two of you were acting together, sharing an intent, and it's clear that the intent was to kill."

Prosecutors had claimed the shooting had been part of drugs turf war.

The judge told Downie that Mr Phillips, who had been for a job interview earlier that day, was "a young man with his life before him" and had been "utterly defenceless".



One of the Dudley Council vans is pulled out of the canal
Picture by Dean Cartwright

Council vans are dumped in canal

THIEVES stole vans used to help the elderly and disabled in Dudley and dumped them in a canal.

The vans were stolen from the Dudley Council depot in Kingswinford on November 11. They ended up in the canal near Cinder Bank roundabout.

Rescue vehicles were called to the towpath to pull the council vans out of the canal.

The vans will be useless after having been totally submerged with only a van roof to be seen poking out of the water before they were hauled back onto dry land.

Senseless

Councillor Qadar Zada, cabinet member for adult social care at the council, said: "This is a senseless and appalling crime, to steal two vans used for transporting equipment to the elderly and disabled."

"I am disgusted that they have targeted the most vulnerable in our community and we take this very seriously."

He added that the council's service to the elderly and disabled would continue as normal.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Actor gives sneak peak of TV plan

STARS of Peaky Blinders are due to return to Dudley in March when filming of the gangster drama resumes.

Star of the hit TV series, actor Cillian Murphy, confirmed that work on series four starts in the spring, when he was interviewed at the premiere of new movie Free Fire.

The story of Brummie gangsters is set between the wars and much of the filming takes place at the Black Country Living Museum, on Tipton Road. Peaky Blinders has become an international hit and inspired a fashion craze for 1920s haircuts and caps.

New officers to fight cyber crime

WEST Midlands Police will take on 200 officers to specifically tackle cyber crime.

The recruits will be in addition to 800 new officers set to join the force by 2020.

Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has made tackling cyber crime one of his key priorities over the next four years as part of his police and crime plan.

Mr Jamieson said cyber crime, such as fraud and terrorism, was one of the biggest challenges facing the force today.

Veteran singer's town hall date

VETERAN singer and actress Anita Harris is to appear in a music hall show in Dudley.

The matinee performance of The Good Old Days of Variety is taking place in Dudley Town Hall on March 14 at 2pm.

The 74-year-old entertainer appeared in two Carry On movies, had hit records in the 1960s and was a star of the 1981 Royal Variety Performance. Tickets cost £12, call (01384) 812812.

Cars, HGV and tyres in scrap yard blaze

FIREFIGHTERS tackled a scrap yard blaze in Lye which saw cars, an HGV and more than 30 tyres alight.

The incident happened near to the Lye Valley Industrial Estate, in Bromley Street, on Friday evening.

Two Crews from Brierley Hill and one from Haden Cross attended.

A West Midlands Fire Service spokesman said: "Scrap metal, 30 tyres, several cars and a HGV were alight. Luckily nobody was injured. We left at 8.34pm."

Winter sun warning

A FIRE service spokesman has warned motorists about the risk of being dazzled by the low in the sky winter sun after an accident in Kingswinford on Friday.

A taxi crashed into the back of a lorry on Market Street just after 11am. No one was injured.



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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



HEINZ produced a TV advert showing how to play a tune using empty baked-bean tins. But after receiving just nine complaints about the alleged danger of kids cutting themselves on sharp edges, the Advertising Standards Authority has banned it. However, since the ban was announced, the ad, and variations of it, have gone viral with just three YouTube videos attracting between them more than two million viewers. So nine complainers and the ASA ban have given Heinz more publicity than it could have dreamed of. In this internet age, banz meanz viewierz.

YET another bunch of parents and kids have been disappointed when a day trip to see Santa turned out to be a tent in a waterlogged field, this time in Derbyshire. But the giveaway, surely, was the name. By this time in human history, we should all be very wary of any attraction involving the words winter, wonderland and grotto. Especially in November.



ED Balls took lot of stick on Strictly Come Dancing before being voted off at the weekend. But of all the contestants, he was closest to the original idea of the show which was to take people from different walks of life, teach them to dance and see how good they could become. Instead, genuine clod-hoppers like Balls find themselves pitched against established showbiz stars who are used to performing song and dance routines, not to mention Olympic gymnast Claudia Fragapane who enlivens her dances with effortless one-handed cartwheels, for goodness' sake. By voting for Balls to stay for ten weeks, viewers defied the experts, refused to toe the line and made a sloping playing field just a bit more level.

MYSTERIES of our time. A full refurbishment of Buckingham Palace will cost £370 million. A full refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster will cost more than 10 times as much, at £4,000m. Now, it may be that the Westminster job really is 10 times bigger than the one at Buck House. Or could it be that politicians spend public money like water while Her Majesty is known to watch every penny?

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Hospital considering alarms after fatal fall

HOSPITAL bosses are looking at bed or chair alarms for some elderly patients after a 96-year-old woman died after falling from a bed in Russells Hall Hospital.

Thelma McDermott also hit her head against a bin as she fell from a bed on which rails had been lowered.

An inquest heard that Mrs McDermott suffered an acute subdural hematoma in an emergency care ward on August 25, after being taken to the hospital for the second time in two days. The first was after falling in her room at Prestwood House Nursing Home, near Stourbridge, and the second after staff at the home became worried about her condition.

After the fall in hospital nurses rushed to Mrs McDermott's aid. Doctors agreed her injuries were too severe for her to be saved. She was taken back to Prestwood House, where she died on August 29.

Crash

Cannock Coroner's Court heard that Mrs McDermott had been on a bed with the rails down and at 4.36am a loud crash was heard. She was found on the floor with a laceration on her head. She was taken for a CT scan and found to have an acute subdural hematoma.

It was suggested she may have been reaching for pull-cord to get a nurse's attention when the fall happened.

Nurse Martin Gallagher said that Mrs McDermott had been given anti-slip socks and the rails had been lowered on her bed

for safety reasons. He said: "The rails are not on the bed to restrain patients, they are there to stop patients rolling over the side and falling out in their sleep. There was no explanation as to why she had fallen. She was in a confused state."

Jane Pugh, lead nurse for the emergency care department, said: "The hospital is currently investigating whether more formal risk assessments should be made and whether bed or chair alarms should be installed."

Senior Coroner for South Staffordshire, Andrew Haigh, said that Mrs McDermott was generally in good health but did suffer from dementia.

"The fall and the head injury is a significant factor," he said. "I don't order the hospital to carry out a further report as I have already heard that staff are looking at different options."

He delivered a narrative conclusion, saying Mrs McDermott was unwell and had a fall.

Soap star and Santa drop in



Father Christmas has a grotto at the Ryemarket centre

STOURBRIDGE and Brierley Hill get lit up for Christmas on Saturday.

There will be festive family fun in Stourbridge town centre from 10am until 5pm including fun-fair rides on Market Street and live entertainment in Crown Square and Fountain Square.

Father Christmas will be in his grotto in the Ryemarket shopping centre from 11am to 4pm, and there will be stalls on High Street and Coventry Street.

Coronation Street star Jack P Shepherd, who plays the troubled David Platt in the top soap, will switch on the lights at 5pm in Crown Square.

Grotto

Santa will be staying in Stourbridge with his grotto open every Saturday until Christmas Eve at the Ryemarket.

Ryemarket centre manager Kelley Dyas said: "Christmas is here and we want to ensure we offer families a destination that embraces the magic."

Brierley Hill will be celebrating from 11am with a Teenage Market in the Moor Centre and the lights switched on at 6pm.

College is under fire after low ranking

SANDWELL College has been criticised after it was ranked among the bottom fifth of colleges in the country, according to a new report.

A survey of bosses finds the college ranked among the worst in the country in terms of employer satisfaction.

The West Bromwich-based campus scored zero out of four in terms of how it was viewed by companies - in stark contrast to colleges in Wolverhampton and Dudley, which both scored high marks putting them in the top third.

Sandwell College was ranked in the bottom 40 colleges overall, according to the league table which also judged sites on the satisfaction of students, success of apprenticeships and how many students found jobs.

The data was revealed by further education website FE Week. Sandwell College scored a meagre employer satisfaction rate of 54 out of 100. This compared to Dudley College, which scored 91.

Sandwell College spokeswoman Helen Dalloway said: "These ratings are entirely arbitrary, based on incomplete data. Our most recent Ofsted report, which graded the college as good, states: 'Apprenticeship provision meets much-needed demands from employers'. Apprenticeship success rates have improved year on year and were five per cent above the national average."

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Unpaid holiday proposal to 'protect' jobs

STAFF at Dudley Council could be forced to take five days unpaid holiday each year as part of the authority's plans to make £1.5 million savings.

The proposal could be part of the cash-strapped Labour council's three-year medium term saving-plan, which seeks to save money following Government funding cuts.

Opposition leaders have aired doubts regarding the proposal. They believe the measure should be optional because it could hit staff on lower wages the hardest.

Conservative member Councillor Les Jones, Chairman of Dudley Council's Corporate Scrutiny Committee, said: "There are a number of options available to the council including this measure. It is just a proposal and it will be subject to negotiations, such as with trade unions.

"The current proposal from the council is that this would be compulsory, but some people will not be able to afford it.

Councillor Jones said that he would agree to the cost-saving measure if it was made optional.

Council leader Councillor Pete Lowe said: "Staff have gone above and beyond through some very difficult times in recent years, but these proposals are very much about protecting jobs and essential front line services."

Goats are settling in at campus home

THREE Pygmy goats have been settling into their new homes at Halesowen College.

Loki, Thor and Odin are have been getting used to their new surroundings.

A courtyard area has been developed for students to expand their animal husbandry skills.

Reduction in council tax relief is set to hit poorest

City's bull statue gets festive makeover



Festive new look for the iconic Bullring Bull as the shopping centre gears up for Christmas

CHRISTMAS has arrived in Birmingham as city icon the Bull at the entrance to the Bullring shopping centre has been given a festive outfit – and this year he's channelling his inner Christmas pudding.

Throughout December the many thousands of visitors to the city centre will be able to stop by and see the

landmark adorned like a pudding with a sprig of giant-sized holly.

The light-up Christmas pudding suit was designed by the Bull's official costume designer, Kate Unwin. She has been responsible for many of his festive looks including the Gingerbread Bull in 2014 and his Elf-inspired outfit last Christmas.

The Bullring's Maggie Foggett said: "The Bull's festive costumes have proved a big hit and we've no doubt that this year's Christmas pudding outfit will be just as popular. The Bull is one of the city's busiest selfie spots so we're asking customers to share their pictures with us on social media using #ChristmasBull."

THE poorest families in Dudley borough are facing a rise in their council tax.

Dudley Council is set to make changes to its reduction scheme, which aims to support low-income families by giving them council tax relief.

Currently, those eligible for the reduction pay 20 per cent of the council tax bill. The amount they will have to pay is now set to rise by two per cent, despite two-thirds of people who took part in the consultation stating they were against the move. The change could save the council more than £150,000.

Currently those eligible in an average Band D property pay £267.56 annually towards the full charge of £1,337.5. Next year's council tax has yet to be set but, if it remains the same, the amount to pay will rise to £294.32.

A decision is set to be made at a full council meeting on Monday but a report states the two per cent increase as the favoured option. Other options include keeping the scheme as it is, or a five per cent rise.

Finance

Council finance boss Councillor David Sparks said chiefs had done 'all we could' to protect low-income households but the authority needed to cut costs as a result of Government funding cuts.

The council currently grants around £19 million in council tax reduction, while collecting around £120m from the rest of the borough.

A consultation found that the majority of people preferred to keep the scheme as it is. A total of 113 of 280 people said they 'strongly disagreed' with the other proposals.

Conservative councillor Steve Clark, shadow for finance, said: "It is going to affect the most vulnerable people in Dudley."

Arrest made after man is found injured

A MAN was found injured after an alleged attack which forced a Rowley Regis road to be closed.

The man, aged in his 30s, was discovered with injuries to his face following reports of an assault on Monday afternoon.

He was taken to hospital where his condition was described as stable yesterday (Wednesday).

A 32-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of assault and was in custody yesterday.

Police were called to the scene of the incident at Ross, near Britannia Park, at around 2.30pm.

Part of the road was sealed off near Churchill Drive while police began their investigations. They were making door-to-door inquiries.

Anyone with information should call Detective Sergeant Leighton Shingles at Force CID on 101.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Stella's not on the ball with latest assertions

I'VE always had a lot of time for Stella Creasy, the West-Midland born MP for Walthamstow once seen as a rising star of the Labour Party.

This is partly because I remember her as a young parliamentary assistant to then Dudley North MP Ross Cranston after finishing university in the 1990s. But more to the point, unlike some of her perpetually disgruntled colleagues, she has come up with some original ideas and thought-provoking campaigns. Her work exposing the extortionate interest rates of payday lenders is a case in point.

But her latest assertion, that the consistent underperformance of the England football team is down to the fact that not enough players went to comprehensive schools, is way off beam.

Miss Creasy says 13 per cent of players picked for England are privately educated – twice the national average – meaning that the talent pool is too narrow.

But, 13 per cent actually amounts to two players, Theo Walcott and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

But if Stella did a bit of digging, she would find that over the years a disproportionate number of England footballers actually went to a single comprehensive school – Idsall School in Shifnal, which is close to where the FA academy at Lillleshall is based.

I know everyone loves a bit of diversity these days but I don't think the failure of the England team is down to Wayne Rooney and Raheem Sterling being too posh. You could blame the money-obsessed Premier League and its demands for instant success, meaning clubs would rather buy ready-made overseas players than nurture their own talent. Or you could blame successive governments, including those of Miss Creasy's party, for selling off school playing fields. But really, I think it's down to the fact that our footballers are not very good.

NOW I doubt if there has ever been much honour among thieves. People who say such things tend to be the sort of dewy eyed, rose-tinted sentimentalists who recall how the Krays had nice table manners.

But there are some crimes taking place today which truly defy belief, that one could not possibly imagine even a couple of decades ago.

Take last week's break-in at the Mary Stevens Hospice shop in Wordsley.

Thieves stole 50 bags of items donated to make hampers which would raise money for those with incurable illnesses.

What sort of person steals from the terminally ill? While we don't know the motives in this case, all too often it turns out that drugs are involved somewhere.

What I do know is that the maximum sentence for a non-dwelling burglary is 10 years. Maybe it should be used more often.



Patsy Kensit, who opened proceedings in 2000



Charlotte Church, seen performing in 2005



Actor Vinnie Jones kicked things off in 1999



Gok Wan and Arlene Phillips at 2010's event

Brum is wear it's at as Clothes Show bows out



Alexandra Burke on stage at the NEC in 2011



All rise – boyband Blue during their appearance, from left, Duncan, Anthony, Simon and Lee



Katie Price at the 'designer beach' in 2009

FROM football hardman Vinny Jones to Welsh singer Charlotte Church and soap star Patsy Kensit, the Clothes Show doors have opened to a cornucopia of stars in Brum over the years.

Other notables include Dawn French, socialite Tara Palmer-Tomkinson and singer Alexandra Burke who have all graced the event since it debuted in 1989.

This year the show stages its last event since moving to the city in 1990, before relocating to Liverpool next year. It takes place from tomorrow, Friday to Tuesday. Caryn Franklin MBE ran The Clothes Show for 12 years from 1986 to 1998.

As final preparations are made for the NEC's last Clothes Show Live, ALEX ROSS looks back at its colourful history

She said: "When I began presenting the BBC's Clothes Show as Fashion Editor of i-D Magazine back in 1986, I had no idea it would have such a far reaching effect and long-term impact on public perception of the fashion industry."

"Our approach to showcasing high-end designer fashion alongside artisan and high street product together with personal and homemade creativity to celebrate all body

types, ages and tastes caught the imagination of the nation and beyond." Among the now-famous models who were first found at the show were Brownhills-based model Erin O'Connor, Oliver Cheshire, Sami Rollinson and Rosie Tapper.

TV personalities were also unearthed – from Cat Deeley to Holly Willoughby and Vernon Kay. Presenters have also included Dermot O'Leary, Louise Redknapp, Gok Wan and Fearnie Cotton. Music acts, dancers and models have also taken to the stage to entertain the crowds. They include Boyzone, JLS, Charlotte Church and Alexandra Burke.

This year the event is recognising and celebrating the talent of young people within the music industry.

It is carrying out a search to find a male and

female artiste who will become the headline acts in the iconic Alcatel Fashion Theatre, in association with Capital FM.

At its launch in October, 1986 on the BBC, The Clothes Show was designed to bring high fashion to the general public, tackling issues such as sweatshops and eating disorders.

Viewing figures rose throughout the 1980s and 1990s, peaking to nine million on the Sunday night.

The live show has seen more than 100,000 visitors every December.

It has become an important day in the calendar to mark fashion history and heritage.

But it has not been without its problems over the years. In 1991 many people were actually snowed in because of the bad weather and had to stay at the NEC overnight.

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Roseville calling... remember us?

I'm not sure if anyone knows the little village of Roseville, Coseley. That is of course anyone except the railway users at Coseley station, for two years now I along with other business owners have been constantly badgering Dudley Council regarding the parking issue, now I'm wondering if they realise we even exist!

Our car parks are blocked from 7am until 7pm. Every time you ring you're told, yes we're aware of the problem and it's being monitored.

We now have to park outside the village

Failings on dementia homcare

IT was shocking and shaming to hear the news last week that so many people with dementia are not being treated with the dignity and respect they deserve when being cared for at home.

It beggars belief that homcare for dementia is not being taken seriously, with one in three homcare workers receiving no dementia training at all. This must change.

It is the difference between seeing a well-trained homcare worker making a confused person relaxed and happy, and someone without that competence making life intolerable for everyone involved.

As an Alzheimer's Society supporter and the former Dignity Ambassador for the Government, I urge your readers to sign the Alzheimer's Society petition and call on the Government to fix a broken homcare system: www.alzheimers.org.uk/fixdementiacare.

SIR MICHAEL PARKINSON
c/o Alzheimer's Society
Tipton

and walk in, as do our customers. God forbid you ever park on the library and are left with a note reading: 'if you're not using the library don't use the car park'.

Now it's beginning to affect our trade as people will just drive off. I telephoned one councillor only to be told there is no problem in Coseley.

Come on Dudley MBC why not try and make our wish come true...all we want for Christmas is some consideration.

MR D BUNCE
Equal Partners Hair Studio, Coseley

The King is a true megastar

REGARDING the King, Elvis Presley. I think it's so brilliant to see the two albums of the King with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (If I Can Dream, The Wonder Of You) go to number one in the album charts - almost 40 years after his passing.

That makes it a record 13 number one albums, which sits proudly alongside his 21 number one singles, also a record.

A true megastar - a word loosely used for a lot of stars today.

Elvis Presley always wanted to sing with an orchestra, I hope we get more of these recordings.

He also sold more records than any other artist and spent more time in the charts than any other artist.

His music will never fade, a true great artist, no one else comes near.

MEL HARPER
Coseley

Hippodrome is an 'eyesore'

HAVING read the article in Dudley Chronicle regarding the Hippodrome, I have a couple of questions to ask.

Who is going to fund this crazy scheme? Five million pounds is not easily raised. I only hope the tax payers are not funding it!

If these people are given the keys for five years that means the eyesore remains for six years at least.

I really cannot imagine that these people will be able to get the venue up and running but they should consider tidying up the frontage first.

J ABBISS
Dudley

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FIVE MINUTES FROM MERRY HILL

Fury at ‘nonsense’ figures for unhealthy Black Country

DUDLEY is the unhealthiest place in the UK followed by Walsall in second and Wolverhampton in sixth, according to figures from... a gambling company.

Dudley Council bosses have hit back, saying the figures are ‘nonsense’. Walsall Council has reported Sports Betting Online, which compiled the figures, to the national health watchdog. The figures show the number of gyms, McDonald’s restaurants, swimming pools, sports clubs, sporting events, public parks and cycle routes per 100,000 people.

Fire destroys old medical record archive

HUNDREDS of patients’ medical records have been destroyed following an arson attack at an archives site.

Paper data from Feldon Lane surgery in Halesowen was destroyed in a fire that saw four industrial units in Wolverhampton gutted on October 20.

In a letter sent to patients, it was stated that records were transferred to the site on Clearwater Industrial Estate, Ettingshall Road, in 2015.

The ‘unprecedented event’ is being investigated by Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, Clinical Governance and West Midlands Fire Service.

Caroline Brunt, chief nurse at Dudley CCG, said: “The loss of Feldon Lane Practice patient records in the recent fire has been reported as a serious incident and managed appropriately by the surgery staff. The protection of a patient’s record is taken very seriously, however, we recognise that unpredictable events happen. Any losses of records are investigated to learn lessons.”

Dudley was found to have the worst gym to population ratio with just three per 100,000. Walsall topped the statistics for the ratio of McDonald’s outlets to people, with 14 per 100,000. Local authorities have rubbished the statistics, which they say has been compiled with ‘little knowledge’ of the region.

Dudley has at least 20 gyms with a population of around 300,000. This means its ratio of gym to people should be around six to 100,000, not the three to 100,000 suggested by the figures. Dudley has six McDonald’s restaurants. This means the ratio would be around three to 100,000, not the ten to 100,000 suggested by the figures.

Unhelpful

Health boss Councillor Rachel Harris said: “Surveys such as this are unhelpful and confusing for people as they are often based on little knowledge of an area. In Dudley we have a very active programme of work to promote healthy lifestyles and tackle obesity. There are eight free outdoor gyms to use in our parks which accompany a packed programme of physical activity and healthy cooking sessions.”

“Add to that our successful walking for health, the daily mile in schools, disability sports provision, exercise referral, Dudley food for health and the Dudley rowing programmes, it is clear to see we are working very hard to encourage fit and healthy lifestyles.”

Parents protest in support of warden



Parents and children join lollipop lady Gail Maiden at the protest calling for crossing wardens to be retained

ANGRY parents have stepped up their opposition to Dudley Council’s plans to scrap school crossing patrols.

Around 30 parents protested outside Quarry Bank Primary School against the funding withdrawal for lollipop wardens in the borough.

Placards were held by concerned mums and dads, reading ‘child safety not council cuts’.

Jennifer Walker, whose six-year-old daughter attends the school, organised the campaign.

She said: “We are aware that Quarry Bank is one of the busiest roads in the borough and we were extremely upset that the council even thought of cutting it as it serves the school directly.”

“Gail, who has been our lollipop lady for more than 15 years, is a staple in the school – she is absolutely golden and is there rain or shine.”

“We are a thoroughfare for all nearby places in the Black Country and traffic can be very heavy.”

“All parents are really concerned

about this, crossing patrols should be sacrosanct.”

Dudley Council currently funds the school crossing service but say the continuing reductions in funding from central government has prompted a review of the service in an effort to save £395,000.

The local authority is not legally required to fund the service and is suggesting alternatives, including schools funding the patrols themselves.

Body cams for 999 medics on agenda

AMBULANCE chiefs are considering whether to provide staff with body cameras after the number of attacks on paramedics in the Black Country and Staffordshire surged in the past six months.

A report by the West Midlands Ambulance Service revealed there were 57 assaults on staff in the Black Country and 35 in Staffordshire in the six months from April to September.

This compared to 89 in the Black Country and 29 in Staffordshire across the whole of the previous year.

In 2014/15, there were 70 assaults in the Black Country and 29 in Staffordshire.

It shows the number of attacks for the six-month period have risen to almost the level which had previously been seen in a whole year.

The figures also showed the attackers made no distinction between male and female medics. In fact, in the Black Country more female staff were attacked than their male colleagues during the six-month period.

A total of 29 women were assaulted, one more than the number of men.

In October, an ambulance on a 999 call was targeted by yobs who hurled food at the windshield from a West Bromwich bridge. Two paramedics were allegedly threatened inside an ambulance in July as they responded to a call in Portobello, Willenhall.

Man appears in court after car crash tragedy

A 24-year-old man has appeared in court over the death of a teenage girl who was killed in a crash in Dudley.

Georgia Ann Evans, 18, from Himley, died in the crash involving her Ford Fiesta and an Audi on Priory Road. Kuba Oles, of Beaconview Road, West Bromwich, is charged with causing death by dangerous driving. He appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court on Monday, but did not enter a plea. He appears again on January 9.

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From heartbreak to fundraising to help Daisy

A FAMILY in Dudley have turned their heartbreak into a fundraising campaign after being told their newborn daughter has cystic fibrosis.

Mother-of-two Samantha Carrier struggled to cope after being told the news about newborn Daisy, which was detected from a heel prick test five days after being born.

Samantha and her partner Rob Evans, from Gornal, raised £676 within seven days of the diagnosis.

Samantha said: "We had a knock on the door from a nurse from Birmingham Children's Hospital telling us she had tested positive."

"We went straight to the hospital the next day to get the medication and get the process started and it was that day we decided we wanted to fundraise and put our minds to something else to raise awareness."

Shouting

"I couldn't really cope with it at first so I started a JustGiving page with an aim over £1,000 over 12 months but we've raised over half within a week. "On the first day it got up to £500 which I couldn't believe because I was running around shouting when we only had £100."

"Ian Austin MP has also offered to help in any way he can."

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition in which the lungs and digestive system can become clogged with mucus - causing problems with breathing and digestion from a young age.

Over many years, the lungs become increasingly damaged and may eventually stop working properly.

A number of treatments are available to help reduce the problems caused by the condition, but unfortunately average life expectancy is reduced for people who have it.



Facing the future together - Samantha Carrier with daughters Daisy and Grace

"The hospital have been really positive but they said a treatment for the condition is being blocked by the government because it's so expensive," says Samantha.

"The aim of it all is to make people aware of cystic fibrosis and try and help push for that necessary treatment."

"We want to raise money for the trust because they're amazing, they support families and research and fund new treatment."

Samantha's daughter Grace, two, also tries to lend Sam a hand when she can.

"Grace helps as much as she can with things like banging on Daisy's chest and sides to move any mucus," she added.

Visit justgiving.com/fundraising/Fordaisyevans and supporters can also follow Daisy's story at www.facebook.com/fordaisyevans/

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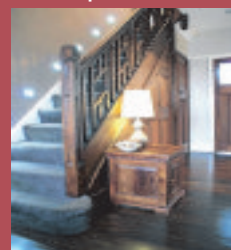
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Museum's bid to raise £10,000 in just 72 hours

THE Black Country Living Museum is launching a bid to raise £10,000 in 72 hours to bring its colliery back to life.

The popular open air museum is calling on the public to help reach the total.

Bosses have also teamed up with TheBigGive.org.uk which will match every donation pound for pound.

Revealing their plans a spokesman for the museum on Tipton Road said: "Coal mines and collieries were the heart and soul of the region. They fuelled the industrial development of the Black Country and helping to create the world we live in today."

"We want our visitors to be able to experience this story for themselves and to do this we're going to revitalise our Racecourse Colliery."

In order to complete the work the museum staff need to raise £205,000.

So far £80,000 has been collected with donations from sources such as Arts Council England and the Owen Family Trust.

Challenge

The museum has already raised £80,000 from sources, including Arts Council England and the Owen Family Trust, but in order to complete the work are looking to raise £205,000 in total.

Between Tuesday this week and tomorrow (Friday) the museum is taking part in The Big Give's #ChristmasChallenge with the aim of raising £10,000 in 72 hours.

Once all the money is secured and the project is finished visitors will be able to see Charlie, the museum's pit pony, pull a tub along the restored tramway. Museum chiefs fear the tub investment is made.

The museum also plans to install a

Black Country Living Museum unveils £205,000 plans for the coal mine area

pit cage to show how miners were lowered into the shaft, with demonstrations at a new blacksmith's forge.

Museum bosses want to enhance visitors' knowledge, enjoyment and understanding of the area's rich industrial past.

They aim to add a host of new char-

acters to talk about the region's history and provide stories of real people who once worked at the colliery.

A video about the project is available to view on The Big Give website.

People can make donations from noon on November 29 to the appeal. Visit www.bclm.co.uk for details.

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Artists' 88th and last display at gallery



Artists Keith Turley, Lynn Jeffery and society chairman Terry Glazebrook at the town gallery's last exhibition

THE Dudley Society of Artists is holding its last exhibition at the town's museum and art gallery, a few weeks before the venue closes.

The art group's 88th exhibition is to be the last at the St James's Road gallery. It opened on Saturday with 130 works by local artists on display.

When the free admission exhibition closes on December 22, so too will the building, ending a long relationship be-

tween the venue and the society. The museum is due to move to a new base at the Dudley Archives centre on Tipton Road, near the Black Country Living Museum.

Artist and society member Keith Turley said: "It is a big blow but it is not going to stop our club and we will still exhibit at other Black Country venues."

The museum and gallery building is closing to the public as part of money-saving measures by Dudley Council.

Store on pub car park

A NEW £1m Co-op store will be built on the car park of a Black Country pub after planning bosses gave the green light.

The new shop will be constructed next to the Hare and Hounds on Wynnall Lane, Stourbridge, with the pub also getting an investment of around £75,000.

Developer NewRiver Retail Ltd

was granted planning permission by Dudley Council, despite objections, and said that up to 20 jobs could be created.

The development firm said money would also be spent revamping the Hare and Hounds.

Dangerous

But Cradley and Wollescote Ward Councillor Richard Body was against the development because of more traffic on an already 'dangerous' road.

"Having parking there would make the road even more dangerous," he said. "Accidents happen on a regular basis. We have the main road with a blind bend and a bus stop next door to a pub, which will have half of its car park gone. Parking already takes place on the pavement."

The 326 square metre one-storey store will be built on part of the car park, which was described as 'currently underutilised' in the planning application.

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Former part time fireman Michael Jewkes with comrades in 1963



Mr Jewkes find his uniform still on the peg, where it's been hanging for more than 50 years



Mr Jewkes tests the old fire siren during his visit to Dudley



Love me tender – Mr Jewkes checks over the machinery left at the old factory fire station

Firefighter 'Little Mike' takes a trip back in time

A FORMER firefighter has travelled back in time to a recently discovered, perfectly preserved factory fire station in Dudley, where he used to work.

Michael Jewkes, aged 80, said it was an 'emotional' revisit to the old station, which has been gathering dust for 60 years, and was only recently uncovered inside the Alan Nuttall Partnership factory on Hall Street.

Mr Jewkes' name is one of those on jackets still hanging at the lost station, which was set up by his former employer the Co-operative Wholesale Society to tackle any fires that might arise in the course of manufacturing items for local Co-op stores.

Michael's journey into his past began after his granddaughter spotted the story on the Express & Star website.

Mr Jewkes, who now lives in Lowestoft, explained: "All the family are originally from the area. My granddaughter lives in Yeovil but she still

MEMORY LANE

Report by Judith Hawkins

reads the Express & Star online. She saw the story about it being discovered and told me. I called the number and spoke to Anna at the Alan Nuttall Partnership Trust and they arranged for me to come and visit."

Frozen

He added: "I must admit, I was like a two-year-old child with a stick of rock. I couldn't believe it after all this time."

Nothing could have prepared Michael for just how much remained intact, almost as if it had been frozen in time, down to the neatly rolled-up canvas hoses still on the walls.

Particularly evocative for him was seeing all the names of his former colleagues scrawled in chalk above the jackets.

"I could hear all of the voices and all of the banter. I could remember the

nicknames. I was very tall so they used to call me Little Mike," he said.

"I hadn't been back for 54 years. It was very emotional. I was remembering all of my comrades. We used to look out for each other, like a big family."

Mr Jewkes explained how between 1960 and 1964 he worked at the factory making safes for the supermarket business, but twice a week he would go for training as a firefighter in the company's small brigade of about 25. This included learning life-saving skills such as resuscitation.

He was relieved that he never had to put this into practice.

"The biggest job we had was probably when the paint shop caught fire, and the van was set alight. But fortunately everyone was out safely," he said.

He and his comrades proved their mettle in a competition with other Co-op forces with Mr Jewkes named champion. A certificate in recognition of this remains on display in the room.



In action for an exercise to test firefighting skills, Michael Jewkes during his time in uniform

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Thousands of fans join in tribute to brave Lydia

THOUSANDS of football fans paid a moving tribute to young Lydia Pearce Ameson, the Dudley girl who died from a rare illness last week.

A packed Molineux – some 28,000 supporters – marked the passing of the 15-year-old Wolves fan on the 15th minute during the match on Saturday by providing a minute of applause in her honour.

Lydia's family and friends were welcomed by Wolves in an executive box as the club hosted Sheffield Wednesday in a Championship match.

Fans of both teams paid their respects to Lydia, who was diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis Type 1 when she was just 18 months old.

The illness is a rare genetic condition which causes tumours to grow along nerves.

Crowd

Wolves were losing after conceding from the penalty spot but that made no difference to the outpouring of emotion, with the club's biggest home crowd in 18 months applauding the youngster.

All around Molineux tens of thousands of people stood up to applaud, including almost three thousand of the fans from Yorkshire.

The Express & Star's Wolves reporter Tim Spiers said: "It was a thunderous ovation, despite the fact the team had just gone behind. It was a really emotional moment."

Sarah Ameson, her mother, said: "It was fantastic and there was a little star above us and we said that was Lydia."

"Everyone at the Wolves looked after us so well and we would like to offer a huge thank you for all their support."

"There were nine of us all together



Devoted Wolves fan Lydia Ameson



Wolves' Danny Batth visited Lydia



Fans pay tribute to Dudley Wolves fan Lydia Ameson during the 15th minute

including Lydia's uncles, godfather and three of her friends.

"The atmosphere was amazing. Her name even shot up on the big screen in the Molineux. It was just perfect."

Captain Danny Batth visited Lydia's home in Dudley last month to hand over a signed shirt to the Bishop Milner Catholic College pupil.

Her mother said: "She was a beau-

tiful and confident girl who loved her family and friends very much. She loved music, dancing and theatre. She had also done a Bake-Off style charity fundraiser in aid of Neurofibromatosis."

A JustGiving page which was set up for Lydia has raised nearly £10,000. To donate visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/lydiapearceameson

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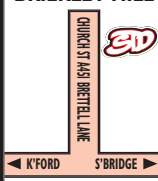
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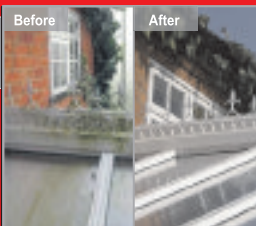
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Bright ideas for home as we head into winter

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips



GIVEN the foul weather this week, I thought it would be nice to take a look around our homes and add some seasonal colour to help fight off those winter blues.

And there are all kinds of vintage items you could pick up in the saleroom to help do this, starting with attractive containers for dried flowers, twisted willow, firethorn or foliage that will instantly transform any room into a brighter place.

You can easily pick up some nice pieces at auction, go along to the viewing days and see what you can find – and you won't have to spend too much money.

Look out for prettily decorated china jugs, the taller the better, but make sure you check for cracks to ensure the jug is waterproof if you want it for fresh flowers.

Glass jugs and vases look great and you may be able to pick these up in some lovely autumnal colours, again look out for any cracks or chips before you buy.

Earthenware containers are always nice, large ones are perfect for displays of foliage in halls or sitting rooms, standing on the floor.

China vases in bright colours or featuring attractive designs are ideal for autumnal displays of flowers or foliage, even small ones will cheer up the corner of a room.

Unusual containers also look good, a pretty vintage soup tureen would provide a home for a larger display or a winter indoor plant.



Then think about adding some lamps with colourful shades to provide some much-needed extra light.

Tiffany lamps in particular are especially attractive and you can pick up some nice reproduction ones if you don't want to pay out for originals.

Potpourri is good in vintage bowls and glasses and looks especially nice displayed in layers in old glass vases.

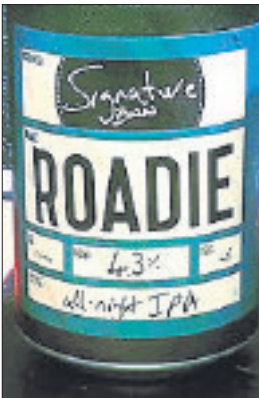
Coloured candles, either standing alone or in groups, also add that extra cheery light, look out for gold and silver ones, and tea-lights can be housed in anything from a tea-cup to a wooden goblet.

You can even make going out in the rain slightly more pleasant by keeping umbrellas in a colourful umbrella stand or vintage plant bowl by your front door (add a Victorian umbrella and a walking stick for effect).

So have a good browse around the saleroom to see what you can find to add that extra seasonal cheer.

Perry and Phillips Auctioneers hold sales of antiques and collectables on the first Tuesday of each month. Valuation days, for sale items only, are held every Wednesday at the Mill Street saleroom in Low Town, Bridgnorth, from 10am until 4pm. The next sale takes place on this Tuesday, December 6, viewing is during the weekend and on the Monday prior to the sale. If you want to bid during the auction and are a new bidder please arrive in plenty of time to register and be allocated a bidding number.

Raising a glass (or mug) to the latest trends



Music and beer: Signature cans

WITH this spell of colder weather we have taken our first autumn walk with a flask of mulled wine in the rucksack, a bit of a tradition and much enjoyed to warm the insides.

There is as much trend and style in what we drink, as what we wear and the popularity of certain drinks wax and wane every year.

Consider our staple coffee and teas, from the basics to the fragrant and flavoured, from the kettle and tea pot to the high street coffee house and the take-away caffeine hit. We have our favourite lattes, cappuccinos, espressos, cooling frappuccinos and herbal infusions.

Even mineral water does not escape the specialist drinks market with 'hint of' fruit flavours, added vitamins and 'free from' all sorts! The shape of the bottle as important as the contents. At a restaurant meal recently we were delivered tap water in a beautiful coloured cooled glass bottle with a metal clamped seal, delightful!

Our need for healthy ingredients leads us to mixing our own fruit and vegetable smoothies, as much a meal and often replacing breakfast or lunch, juicers have also increased in popularity in the kitchen.

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis



Fruit features strongly in the revival of the alcoholic cocktail, new and old recipes equally popular and now available in foil packets, some of which can be frozen to achieve a crushed ice drink.

The Cider revival continues, with seemingly never ending choice, sparkling, still, clear, cloudy, pear, apple, dark or light. Bulmers, Strongbow and Magners spending considerable amounts on advertising to a welcome market. The choice of spirits and mixers is diverse, many types and varied flavours of gin, vodka and whiskey, some of these products promoted by celebrities such as David Beckham, Haig in its bright blue chunky bottle and Mila Kunis, the face of Jim Beam, and then presented in unusual drinking vessels, dressed with flowers and leaves, sold in elaborate bottles.

Music artists are putting their names to craft beers, getting involved in the creative process and the marketing. One of the breweries doing this is 'Signature Brew' (signaturebrew.co.uk), collaborating with the likes of Professor Green, Frank Turner and Enter Shikari, a great mix of music and beer. Micro breweries and pubs are opening in the smallest of retail units. The Merckx Belgian Bar in Eccleshall is worth a visit (merckxbar.co.uk) we are lucky enough to have Joule's Brewery on our doorstep (joulesbrewery.co.uk)

The choice of wine gets ever bigger, red, white and rose from every country of the world but the vineyards of the UK now produce some beautifully flavoured offerings at reasonable prices. Italian Prosecco becomes the new favourite over Cava and Asti and sweet wines with dessert are worth investigating.

Whatever your alcoholic tipples beware of the alcoholic content, with all the new options it can vary dramatically...Cheers all!

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Parents who pay for their children's education may not be making best use of their money, says presenter Martin Lewis

Money misdemeanours may cost you thousands



Money expert Martin Lewis

ARE you a sinner? Financially that is. There are a host of everyday money misdemeanours that millions of people do, costing them thousands, without being aware of it.

These aren't horrors like grabbing a payday loan, but the result of simple misunderstandings, bad habits or inaction. I've collated five of the most common.

1. Savings rates are depressingly low – the top easy-access rate is one per cent. Credit card and other interest rates are depressingly high.

So £1,000 credit card debt at 18 per cent costs it costs you £180 a year, the same amount saved in top paying savings account at one per cent interest only earns you £10. If you had both, pay the debt off with your savings and you'd be £170 a year better off.

Many of you will be thinking, "but I want to keep my savings, what if the boiler packs up or the roof falls in?" However, that's a sentimental strategy, not a logical one.

If you don't pay the debt off with the savings and an emergency happens that cost you £1,000 to fix, you'd use all your savings and still £1,000 of credit card debt.

If you do pay off the debt with the sav-

By Martin Lewis

ings, and a £1,000 emergency happens, you'd need to pay for it on your credit card, meaning you still have no savings and £1,000 of credit card debt.

The end result of them both is the same, yet by paying off the debt with the savings, you save in the meantime.

2. Most people in the UK are on their energy firm's standard tariff, which typically means they're overpaying by £300 a year. The best plan is take five minutes to do a full market comparison via my www.CheapEnergyClub.com or any www.Ofgem.gov.uk approved comparison site.

Even if you won't do that, just pick up the phone and ask your current provider "Am I on your cheapest tariff?" and, if not, switch to that as there's no change but the price.

3. Credit card minimum payments are based mostly on a percentage of the balance, which only just covers the interest. So you hardly clear any off.

A 30-year-old with £3,000 debt on a credit card at 17.9 per cent interest, who made only typical minimum repayments, would take 27 years to clear it. By then, they'd be 57 and have paid a total cost £4,000 in interest (see my minimum repayment calc at www.mse.me/minrepay to work out how long it'll take you).

On £3,000 debt, the current minimum is around £70 a month. If instead of opting to pay the minimum, fix your repayment at £70. The debt will clear in five years at a cost of £1,500 in interest, saving £2,400.

Though if you've debt on more than one credit card, focus all spare cash on repaying the most expensive, making only the minimums on the others. That way you get rid of the most expensive debts first.

4. Your house price is the wrong figure, you only need to insure the usually much lower rebuild cost – literally how much it would cost to rebuild your home should it get knocked down. This is often far less than the market value.

5. I'm often freaked out by parents telling me they're saved up so their child won't have to pay tuition fees at uni. Worse, some even extend their mortgage. My problem isn't just that actually it's students', not parents' responsibility to repay this.

All new English full-time students can get a tuition fee loan and a living loan to help pay for uni costs. You're eligible to start repaying in the April after leaving, but only if you earn over £21,000.

Most of course will earn over the threshold. However only high earners will earn enough to repay in real terms what they borrowed within 30 years. For most parents it's better to build up a mortgage deposit.

Get your geek on with Jonathan's sci-fi novel

AS ambitions go, one Halesowen man is ticking off his list of things to achieve at some pace – adding author to the mix.

Jonathan Hipkiss spends his days working on a Cradley industrial estate but his passion for creativity knows no bounds.

He is an up-and-coming stand-up comedian, having supported Jack Whitehall at Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena; starred alongside respected actor Toby Jones in BBC's critically acclaimed drama *Marvelous* and co-written a live sketch show, performed at last year's Edinburgh Fringe.

Novel

Now aged 25, Jonathan has just released his first novel.

The former Windsor High School student – who went on to study professional acting at Birmingham Theatre School – enjoys running, writing, performing, but his greatest love is for all things Star Wars.

It was inevitable that his novel would be in the science fiction genre.

Rise of the Geeks Following an Alien Invasion! is a lighthearted take on the genre, poignantly examining the lost innocence of youth in a coming-of-age tale as four boys forced to

tackle things they fear most – love, and loss.

"While there are no direct comparisons to anyone I know in the book, in some way, the main four characters, the geeks/boys, are each a little part of me and loosely based on my experiences as a geek and my inept way with women," said Jonathan.

"The adventure aspect of the story came from my love of movies and my desire to escape the real world. I'd rather be watching *Star Wars* than the news, though doing stand-up means you have to keep up to date with the world."

The book focuses on a group of friends, Chivers, Matt, Tom, and Mark are about to have their mundane existences thrown into chaos when four tiny aliens crash-land into their lives.

"After I've finished promoting the book, myself and my comedy partner, Sam, will take to writing a new hour long show over Christmas which we plan to take on the road and return to next year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The book is available to buy online via Amazon or contact the author directly for a discount (£10 including postage) or to have a copy signed via h2005@hotmail.co.uk



Halesowen author and comedian Jonathan Hipkiss signs copies of his latest science fiction novel

Thousands more homes are given the green light

A PLAN to deliver thousands of new homes and jobs in Birmingham can be given the go-ahead by the Government. The Birmingham Development Plan (BDP), which sets out a 15-year strategy, can now be formally adopted and approved by Birmingham City Council.

Housing Minister Gavin Barwell lifted a 'holding direction' which had prevented the BDP from progressing, pending investigation into proposals to earmark land in the Sutton Coldfield green belt for housing and employments. Mr Barwell said he agreed the scale of unmet housing demand in Birmingham was 'exceptional and possibly unique'.

Conclusions

The Housing Minister said he saw no reason to disagree with the conclusions an inspector that the BDP was consistent with national planning policy and should be adopted. The plan sets out proposals to address the city's housing crisis by building 51,000 homes, including up to 6,000 in Sutton Coldfield. The green belt land was identified after a city search to identify locations for more homes on previously developed land, known as brown-field sites, had apparently gone as far as it could.

Research by the council concluded that 89,000 homes are required over the next 15 years to meet the needs of Birmingham's growing population. Councillor John Clancy, leader of Birmingham City Council, said: "We can now get on with the vital task of building homes and delivering the jobs that our fast-growing population so desperately needs."

Debt hits the lives of 45,000 children

MORE than 45,000 children in the Black Country are living in families trapped in problem debt, a national charity has revealed.

It means that one in six families with children in the region have been failing to keep up with household bills and loan repayments in the past year.

The evidence, based on a survey commissioned by The Children's Society, also showed that families with children are more than twice as likely to have been trapped in problem debt as childless households.

In some cases children are going without basics such as food, clothing or heating, as well as suffering worry, anxiety and bullying.

The figures show that Sandwell has the biggest problem with 7,300 families in serious debt, affecting 13,000 children, followed by Walsall with 7,100 families, including a total of 12,600, with debt problems.

Dudley has 5,600 families in a similar situation, affecting 10,000 children, and Wolverhampton 9,400 families, including 9,600 children, in trouble with debt.

Concerned

The charity says it is 'deeply concerned' about the impact of debt.

The survey of 2,000 adults, carried out by Opinionium, found that families in problem debt over the last year are juggling an average of four different types of debt.

Children in low-income families with multiple debts are at far higher risk of experiencing mental health

By Marion Brennan

problems than those in families who owe money to a single type of creditor.

The most common source of problem debt is arrears on energy bills, followed by loans from friends and family, bank loans, and council tax. Almost one third of parents have arrears of more than £5,000.

The Children's Society, as part of its Debt Trap campaign, is calling for changes to how creditors treat families with children who fall behind on bills and repayments.

It is urging the Government to introduce a 12-month 'breathing space' to give struggling families a period of protection from additional charges, interest and enforcement action while they seek advice, put their finances in order, and get back on their feet.

The charity is publishing a draft of a parliamentary bill to make this 'breathing space' a reality for hundreds of thousands of families. The bill is being sponsored by Kelly Tolhurst MP and will be debated by MPs in the New Year.

Showcase for talent

HALESOWEN Youth Theatre will be staging its first Christmas showcase on December 10 at the Shenstone Theatre in Halesowen Library at 7pm. Ben Pountney, co-founder and co-director of Halesowen Youth Theatre, said the group catered for ages 11-18 and meets on Wednesday evenings. For tickets or more information email halesowenyouththeatre@outlook.com or call 07713822499.

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Pretty Paxos offers haven of calm and relaxation

“LAKKACHATTA swinda lactu,” says my six-year-old daughter Rosie, pencil poised on a notepad.

“Yasi,” comes the reply from her sister Poppy, four, who’s sat at the table. “Ikki tabu.”

It’s a new game they’ve started playing since we landed in sunny Greece. They’re being waitresses and making an effort to grasp the local language.

It’s been 15 years since I last visited this country.

Back then, it was all booze and bathing, but this time I’m here with my family, discovering a land more akin to the one Gerald Durrell wrote about in *My Family And Other Animals*, when he wished he could give everyone the gift of his wonderful childhood.

After flying into Corfu, we hop on the hydrofoil and bob across the ocean for an hour to pretty Paxos – the smallest of the Ionian Islands, and said to be similar to the Corfu Durrell adored as a child.

With winding roads, gorgeously green plants, an azure sea and villas dotting every corner of the three main villages, it’s clear this is a part of the world that’s made for exploring.

Our villa, Milou, is a grand affair – set off the beaten track at the top of a hill – with nothing surrounding it but a handful of other properties.

The front door opens into an enormous games room, with a very cool, electric blue billiards table. We make downstairs our slumber zone, with a main bedroom leading out to the poolside, and a calming twin room, painted to match Greece’s country colours of blue and white. The kitchen-dining area is spacious, white and welcoming, but we spend most of our days outside.

The infinity pool provides hours of entertainment for the kids – and Daddy, who loves nothing more than drenching them with a running dive-bomb. And the view, looking out towards the Pindus mountains, is enough to take the relaxation factor up a notch or two.

Mind you, there’s a cackle of hysterics as the volume on the docking station reaches ear-piercing levels, belting out club classics in the blazing sunshine. I emerge from the pool to see my husband James throwing some serious shapes, shouting, ‘Pool party’, while our children giggle at his moves and attempt to join in.



We spend our days gorging on Greek salad with fat and furiously red tomatoes, crunchy cucumber, giant lumps of local feta cheese and lashings of olive oil and oregano. And come the evening, James lights the BBQ and cooks the most enormous sausages ever seen, pork and chicken kebabs, giant peppers, and what can only be described as a ‘nine-bar’ of halloumi, all bought in the local shops at Gaios, the island’s capital, and beautiful

Loggos, both just a few miles away. It’s cheap too – we easily buy enough meat to feed us all, with masses of leftovers, for nine Euros at the old-fashioned butcher’s.

A car is essential here. Even just getting supplies for the villa is tricky without wheels. And it means you can explore this beautiful, unspoilt island with ease.

Measuring around a mere eight miles from one end to the other, Paxos doesn’t take long to get around, though roads can be tricky to navigate. We easily get lost amid rural roads, while trying to avoid pedestrians, shush unbelievably excited children and translate Greek road signs. We pass giant pots planted up with cacti, aloe vera and lavender, watched over by gnarly old olive trees, as holey as honeycomb.

We drive past a school with signs warning us that children cross here, but there’s no one to be seen. When compared with overcrowded Corfu, it seems crazy that so few make the extra journey to experience the peace of Paxos.

We find a craggy bit of headland near Lakka, Paxos’ most northerly tip, where giant rocks peer over and stand tall from the sea. I investigate a growing green mass with bulbous, almost pod-like ends, that I’m certain must be edible. I look around to ask someone, but there isn’t a soul to be seen – just the four of us, deserted on our own idyllic coastland.

“It’s like a sunset in the sea,” says Rosie, describing how the ocean changes from clear to turquoise, into azure and navy. And I smile, thinking Durrell would have been pleased with her description. When we return to England’s less sunny shores, I ask if they’d like to holiday in Paxos again. “Yakka chakka!” comes the reply. I’ll take that as a yes.

By Claire Spreadbury



Decorations and special displays throughout the park



All ready for Christmas at Thomas Land, Drayton Manor



Get into the festive spirit with Thomas and friends

Santa and ‘snow’ at magical theme park

WE’RE usually much later with our annual visit to Santa, squeezing it in the week before Christmas when present lists are finally finalised.

However, this year our family was invited to kick off the festive season early, with a visit to Drayton Manor Theme Park’s Magical Christmas for a special preview.

It may still be November, but we’re now well and truly full of the festive spirit after spending a delightful day with Santa and his reindeer, making presents for meerkats and being covered in ‘snow’.

There was even ice-skating on the indoor Slide & Glide, which delighted eight-year-old Zoe. Although the larger park rides were closed, there was still enough to entertain children of all ages as well as the ‘big kids’.

A highlight for us, with older children, was the Ben 10 Ultimate Mission Rollercoaster. With hardly any queues, it had plenty of use by the four of us. After that, and lunch, the more leisurely pace of the traditional Carousel was appreciated and we were treated to a fantastic 4D cinema experience with the Polar Express, a 15-minute adventure shown throughout the day.

Taking a walk around the zoo, the children were thrilled to see the meerkats and lemur enjoying the ‘presents’ they had made for them at a mini workshop when we arrived. It was lovely to step inside the warmth of the reptile house where many people remarked that the animals appeared much more active than usual – maybe they were all excited by the special visitors from the North Pole. Santa’s reindeer have pride of place at the entrance of the zoo, with their pen decorated with giant baubles. They looked like they were getting plenty of rest before their big job pulling the sleigh on Christmas Eve.

Drayton Manor visitors can see Santa at The Castle of Dreams and we eagerly arrived at our time slot to be greeted by two cheerful elves. Inside the castle, the decorations were beautiful and seeing Santa was

REVIEW

By Liz Gray

just as magical as we had hoped. George, 11, was lost for words as Santa told him to stop arguing with his sister, while Zoe couldn’t stop grinning. With four weeks to go until Christmas, there could be another advantage to visiting Santa so early – if they both keep their promise to be good.

We spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying the rides in Thomas Land, with favourites including the Troublesome Trucks Runaway Rollercoaster and Bertie Bus. This part of the park has undergone a £2.5 million expansion and there is a new two-storey Sodor Airport complex with VIP suites available for private hire.

Thomas Land became a real winter wonderland with flurries of ‘snow’ throughout the day courtesy of a special machine and there were balcony shows where you could meet the characters. There was also plenty of festive music being played and, as it began to get dark, the Christmas lights created the perfect atmosphere. Plenty of pictures were taken by the giant Christmas tree and the day was rounded off with a parade and a dazzling fireworks display.

For us it was a great way to experience the theme park at a time of year we would not normally think of going. And we will be sure to return for the new season in 2017, as each child who visits Santa receives a golden ticket for a free visit.

Just an hour’s drive from Shropshire, the park, near Tamworth, has a selection of packages available for the Christmas period for its four-star hotel. Ticket prices for Drayton’s Magical Christmas including Santa start at £22 per adult and £17 for children and over 60s. Children aged 2-3 cost £12 and under twos are free. There is free entry to both serving and non-serving members of the armed forces. Drayton’s Magical Christmas is open tomorrow (Friday) until Monday and from December 2-5, 9-12, 15-23 and 27-31. Visit www.draytonmanor.co.uk



Big smiles for Santa in The Castle of Dreams at Drayton Manor Theme Park

Unexpected tip-top destination has plenty of heritage



Pay a visit to Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory

SPOTLIGHT ON TIPTON

Currency: Pork scratching. GBP is available in some outlets.

Brief overview: In honour of all things Steve Bull, we present to you our finest, most unique and undoubtedly our most unexpected holiday destination – Tipton. It has everything you could possibly need like boxing connections, great chip shops, more pork scratchings than anywhere else in the world, brilliant pubs and more. Viz Comic famously reported that Jesus was born in Tipton – ha, and here’s all us fools imagining he was born in Jerusalem. Oh yes, and Tipton also lent its name to the brilliant Lazy Cow Doreen Tipton, who plans to ape American President Donald Trump by building

a wall around the Black Country to keep out illegal Brummies.

Where to stay: While Tipton doesn’t have the same range of hotels as Tokyo or Paris, it offers a number of delightful B&Bs. Expect a full English for breakfast and change from £50.

What to do: The choices are endless. And no, we ay pullin’ ya leg. Tipton is so steeped in history that it has its own Heritage Trail. Visit the Factory Locks, Victoria Park, Tipton Carnegie Centre – which is not to be confused with the Carnegie Hall in New York – or the Cast Iron Roving Bridges, over local canals. Then there’s St John’s Church and St Mark’s Church, The Old Line Canal, Malthouse Stables, The Boat Gauging House and, best of all, The Tipton

Slasher statue near to The Fountain Inn. The Slasher, as all Tiptonians know, was a British heavyweight prize fighter in the 19th century and English champion from 1850-57. Alternatively, follow in the footsteps of Black Country legend Steve Bull, whose first school was Wednesbury Oak Primary and who then attended Willingsworth High, where he made a name. Tipton Town’s stadium is opposite Wednesday Oak – and Asda’s just up the road, so you can fill up on fuel if your car’s running low.

What to eat/drink: Scratchings, a pint of Bathams and a bag of chips. Alternatively, pop into Mad O’Rourke’s Pie Factory, the home of Desperate Dan’s Cow Pie and the almost-legendary pint of Lumphammer.

New chancellor Sir Lenny believes in learning for all

EDUCATION is a right for everyone and not an 'accident of birth', said Sir Lenny Henry as the Dudley-born actor and comedian became a university chancellor.

In his first speech as Birmingham City University's new chancellor, Sir Lenny, 58, talked about how he grew up believing that education was 'not for the likes of me', and did not begin studying for qualifications until he was an adult.

Sir Lenny, who received a knighthood last year, told an audience at Birmingham Town Hall: "I grew up with the belief that education was not intended for the likes of me."

Brave

"It wasn't until I was doing a summer season with Cannon and Ball in 1981 that I was brave enough to embark on my GCSEs.

"It was tough going, but I got through it.

"I was 46 before I got my first degree with the Open University and, while a comparative latecomer to higher education – whose career hardly relied on securing a BA or an MA after my name – that experience changed my life. It opened my mind to more possibilities and new thinking and different perspectives."

He added: "Being chancellor of Birmingham City University is a chance for me to give back, to contribute something to the generation of young people leaving school now and to those people coming back to education – mature students – who, like me, missed out on the chance when they were younger.

"This institution understands that education is a right, not an accident of birth."



Sir Lenny Henry sits and chats with students at Birmingham City University, where he's now chancellor

Electric cars spark 10,000 jobs hope

THE boss of Jaguar Land Rover wants to make new electric vehicles in the West Midlands, creating 10,000 new jobs at JLR and up to 60,000 more in its supply chain across the region.

Ralf Speth has also outlined ambitions to double JLR's car production to one million vehicles a year by 2020 – and double its workforce to 90,000. The plans were outlined as a meeting of political and business leaders at Warwick University on Thursday night, organised by Professor Lord Kumar Bhattacharyya, a close adviser to JLR and its Indian owners, Tata Motors. He is also head of the university's Warwick Manufacturing Group.

Lord Bhattacharyya said JLR wanted to start work on the electric cars project at Coventry by 2018, with cars going into production by 2019. It follows the launch of JLR's first electric car, the I-Pace, in Los Angeles last week. It will be built in Austria 'because we couldn't do it fast enough in this country,' said Lord Bhattacharyya.

"But the next generation will be done here, hopefully," he added. "That will create 10,000 jobs. That could literally be another 50,000 to 60,000 jobs among suppliers."

Cousin used murder victim's bank card

THE cousin of murdered Richard Groves was involved in a fraud to take money from his bank account after his death, a court heard.

Homeless Darren Lander was jailed for more than 15 years last month after he savagely killed 32-year-old Mr Groves, after Mr Groves had felt sorry for him and allowed him to stay at his flat at Alfred Gunn House in Thompson Road, Langley.

At Walsall Magistrates Court, Christopher Bonner, 38-year-old cousin of Mr Groves, admitted one charge of fraud by false representation where he used Mr Groves' bank card at the Post Office on High Street, Oldbury, two days after his death.

The transaction, made after Bonner was given the card by Lander, only totalled £2. But the court heard that in the weeks following the murder, Bonner and Philip McEvoy, 42, from Yardley Close, Oldbury, used the card a several times, withdrawing around £500 that the pair spent on drugs.

Ms Alka Brigue, prosecuting, said that McEvoy had been given the card by Bonner, while each's defence solicitor said neither man knew that the card belonged to the deceased Mr Groves.

Prosecuting McEvoy, who pleaded guilty to nine counts of fraud by false representation, Ms Brigue said: "When officers examined the body of Mr Groves, they saw that his pockets were turned inside out and began to investigate his financial affairs. They saw that in the days since his death, there had been activity on

By Jordan Harris

his bank card and began to track down who was responsible for this. CCTV enquiries were carried out with shops where the card had been used and this led officers to Mr McEvoy."

Defending McEvoy, Dawn Foxhall said: "Mr McEvoy can't read or write so didn't recognise the name on the card."

Defending Bonner, Roy Patterson said: "This is bizarre because the victim of the murder is my defendant's cousin. He didn't know that the card belonged to Mr Groves and since this has come to light he has suffered a great deal – he wasn't allowed to attend the funeral and has been shunned by his family."

McEvoy was given a 12 month community order, 20 days of rehabilitation activity and a six month drug rehabilitation programme. He was also ordered to pay £502 compensation, an £85 victim's surcharge and £135 costs. Bonner was given an eight week curfew, ordered to pay £2 compensation, an £85 victim surcharge and costs of £135.

Council is offering condensation advice

DUDLEY Council is helping residents tackle condensation in their homes with a new advice leaflet and video on its website.

Anyone experiencing such a problem can download an advice leaflet and view a video on the Dudley Council www.dudley.gov.uk website.

Condensation is caused when warm moist air comes into contact with cold air or a cold surface, causing water droplets to form. This is particularly an issue during winter when homes are warmer than outside.

Housing boss Councillor Gaye Partridge said: "Condensation and mould can be a particular problem during the winter months so we produced a leaflet and an video which work hand in hand.

"These items have been produced primarily with council tenants in mind, but are relevant to anyone experiencing condensation in their home."

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Good lighting is achieved by creating different layers of light



Acropolis table lamp, £20.70, available from Very

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Create the right ambience with softer lighting, using more than one light source



Scarlett black chandelier, £316, from Debenhams



Loft table lamp and floor lamp, Marks and Spencer



A good scheme allows you to instantly reinvent a space

WINTER may be bleak and dark, but it's the perfect time to switch on the power of lighting and illuminate rooms with everything, from razzle-dazzle new effects to simple bulbs which shine a spotlight on a feature, or even change a mood.

"Lighting really matters in a home and can literally transform it," promises George Clarke, architect and TV's popular property presenter of George Clarke's Amazing Spaces and The Restoration Man.

"I've seen great buildings ruined by bad lighting schemes, and great lighting improve bad buildings. It can truly make that much difference.

"What's fantastic these days, is that there are affordable, effective ways of personally tailoring lighting schemes, using technology like smart phones and tablets, which a decade ago, would have costs thousands."

Clarke, who's currently working with Philips lighting, believes good lighting doesn't just have a visual effect, but can also help improve our wellbeing.

"Artificial light can now mimic natural light and light systems can be programmed to suit our body rhythms.

"Replicating a soothing sunset glow in the

By Gabrielle Fagan

evening can help people relax and encourage relaxation and sleep, while gradually increasing light levels in the morning to mimic sunrise can encourage us to wake in a more gentle fashion.

"Lights conjuring the effect of natural sunlight indoors may offset the negative effect of a grey day outside. There's almost no limit to what can be achieved."

Brightness

Recent research by B&Q revealed that 85% of us have no idea which bulb brightness is best to suit a task or set a mood. Clarke gives his guide to LED lighting...

"In general, people are scared by lighting and confused by all the terminology.

"That's a real shame because LED lighting is so versatile these days. For instance, there's a misconception that it's a cold light, but the key to success is selecting the right colour temperature of the bulb, which is measured in a unit called a kelvin (k)," he explains. "Bulbs with higher kelvin value create a cooler, crisp white light (4000k) which are suitable for practical areas, like a kitchen or bathroom, while those with a lower kelvin value (3000k) produce a warmer white light more appropriate for living rooms.

"If you want to easily change the ambience, there are innovations like a Philips Scene Switch LED light bulb (£9.99, Amazon) which allows you to use your light switch to flick between three different light levels, from bright to natural to a soft warm light. This bulb can be used on an existing light [simply using your normal light switch to change between settings] and removes the need for a dimmer."

LIGHT TOUCH

"A common mistake people make is only having light coming from one source - for instance, simply having a ceiling light. In reality, good lighting is achieved by creating different layers of light which conjure variation, texture and atmosphere," says Clarke. "Clever accent lighting - wall scones, floodlights, recessed lights or track lighting - can dramatically change a space and highlight key areas or architectural features. Even just hanging an adjustable pendant light over a dining table will define the space and make it feel more intimate. Coloured lighting is also a fantastic way to add a 'wow' factor, especially if the light source is hidden. Use coloured light strips above kitchen units, but, to get the maximum effect, keep the background a neutral white as a contrast."

SEE THE LIGHTS: Nothing makes more of a statement than an intricately designed chandelier and, for a modern approach, fit one in an unexpected place like a kitchen or a bedroom. Debenhams has an impressive lighting

collection with the added bonus that many pieces are currently reduced online. A Scarlett Black Chandelier, with smoke and clear glass crystal strands, is reduced from £395 to £316, and a Penelope Pendant Ceiling Light, featuring layers of smoke glass cylinders, reduced from £320 to £256. Cluster lights are ultra-fashionable and its contemporary Harrison Cluster Ceiling Light is down from £150 to £120.

Very's Glass Cloche Ceiling Light, £99, blends modern with traditional style, with a clear glass dome showcasing a cluster of light strings, and another winner in its collection is a Forest Pendant with etched tree design, £19.

Dar Lighting, which has nationwide stockists, has super pendant lights and I particularly like its Tower Cluster Pendant, RRP £118.80. Pared-back designs allow materials to shine and B&Q's Jonas Wire Copper Pendant Ceiling Light, £47, is a good example of that approach. Urban Cottage Industries, specialists in vintage and industrial lighting, which offers bespoke lights, has a funky Green Large Balloon Light Bulb Cage, from £55.44. Experiment with coloured light with a Philips Hue LED Iris Light Colour Changing Mood Smart Lamp, £70, B&Q.

TRICK OF THE LIGHT

"Lighting should be flexible, so you can zone different areas and alter light levels to change mood, atmosphere or focus it to better suit a

specific activity," says Clarke. "A good scheme allows you to instantly reinvent a space - or, in increasingly popular open-plan living rooms, the areas within the space - without having to change a room's overall layout.

"There are so many ways to draw the eye. Bare bulbs are very much on-trend, as are metallic finishes and sculptural shapes. Table lights are a really good way to partition areas in a room, so a light on a side table behind a sofa will create a visual break in an open plan room.

"Do bear in mind colours and surfaces reflect and absorb light in different ways. Shiny materials like satin, silk and metal bounce light around a room, whereas darker, denser materials, such as wool and velvet, soak up light."

SEE THE LIGHTS: Show off your style credentials with lights inspired by the gaudy stars of the fairground. The fun Marquee collection at Debenhams has a selection: Flamingo Light, £150; Burst Star and Rainbow Floor Lights, both currently reduced online from £150 to £120; Lightening Bolt Floor Light, down from £95 to £76, and Cactus Floor Light, currently reduced from £125 to £100.

Laura Ashley's Odiham Antique Brass Desk Lamp, currently £87.50, down from £125, is a classic and its matching Sphere Pendant Light is £122.50. Adjustable lights are super-useful and Marks & Spencer's Loft Adjustable Task Floor Lamp, £99, has a matching Table Lamp, £45.

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James are
back – Page 25

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Thursday, 8pm
Robin 2, Bilston
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 See therobin.co.uk

Kate Tempest



Sunday, 7pm
O2 Institute 2, Birmingham
 The forthright poet and rapper, who recently released her second album Let Them Eat Chaos, brings tales of desperation from the streets of London. See academymusicgroup.com/o2institutebirmingham

Primal Scream



Sunday, 7pm
O2 Institute, Birmingham
 The venue will be taken to a funky-electro-psych meltdown with Glaswegian rock god Bobby Gillespie (pictured) still at the helm after 34 years. See academymusicgroup.com/o2institutebirmingham

Josh Widdicombe



Thursday, 7pm
Civic Hall, Wolverhampton
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Jimmy Carr: The Best Of, Ultimate Gold, Greatest Hits Tour
 Tomorrow - Sun,
 Wolves Civic, WV1 1RD.
 Call 0870 320 7000

Christmas Queens featuring Michelle Visage
 Wed,
 O2 Institute Birmingham, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DY.
 Call 0121 631 1800

Josh Widdicombe: What Do I Do Now
 Thu,
 Wolves Civic, WV1 1RD.
 Call 0870 320 7000

THEATRE

Treasure Island
 Tonight - Thu,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Library of Birmingham, B1 2EP.
 Call 0121 236 4455

Sunny Afternoon
 Tonight - tomorrow,
 Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 1AP.
 Call 0844 871 7649

An Evening with Archers actress Sunny Ormonde
 Tomorrow, £14
 Artrix, Slideslow Dr, 1527871580, Sat 03 Dec, £14.00
<http://artrix.co.uk/whats-on/theatre-dance/an-evening-with-archers-actress-sunny-ormonde/>

A Christmas Carol
 Tomorrow - Thu,
 The Crescent Theatre, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B16 8AE.
 Call 0121 643 5858

Sister Act
 Mon - Thu, £33.60 - £44.80
 Malvern Theatres, WR14 3HB.
 Call 01684 892277

City Songbirds at Christmas
 Mon - Wed,
 Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3AD.
 Call 0844 871 7649

Keep Dancing
 Tue - Thu,
 New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, B5 4DS.
 Call 0121 643 5536

ART & CULTURE

Art Lates :: Bubbles & Blues
 Tomorrow,
 Birmingham Museums Art Gallery, B3 3DH.
 Call 0121 348 8007

Florentine Arts Ensemble: Dahl's Norwegian Landscape
 Tonight,
 The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TS.
 Call 0121 414 7333

Birmingham Wine Tasting Experience Day 'World of Wine' with Wine Unearthed
 Tomorrow, £89
 Bank Restaurant & Bar, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2JB.
 Call 0121 633 4466

War Artists Lecture Series
 Tomorrow,
 The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TS.
 Call 0121 414 7333

Christmas Food & Craft Fayre
 Tomorrow,
 Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Shifnal, TF11 8LE.
 Call 01952 852100

Seasonal markets
 Tomorrow,
 Croome, High Green, Worcester, WR8 9DW.
 Call 01905 371006

Sleeping Beauty – The Pantomime of Dreams
 Tomorrow,
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR.
 Call 01543 412121

Cellar Tour
 Tomorrow,
 Erasmus Darwin House, Lichfield, WS13 7AD.
 Call 01543 306260

Christmas crafts
 Tomorrow,
 Croome, High Green, Worcester, WR8 9DW.
 Call 01905 371006

Christmas Celebrations
 Tomorrow,
 Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, B18 6HA.
 Call 0121 554 3598

A Night of Miracles
 Tomorrow,
 Stourbridge Town Hall, DY8 1YE.
 Call 01384 812960

Ludlow Orchestra
 Tomorrow,
 Ludlow Assembly Rooms, SY8 1AZ.
 Call 01584 878141

Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music by Candlelight
 Tomorrow,
 St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, WV1 1TY.
 Call 01902 422642

Sunday Classics
 Sun,
 Spotted Dog, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0NH.
 Call 0121 772 3822

Christmas Creations
 Sun, £4 - £6
 RBSA Gallery, Birmingham, B3 1SA.
 Call 0121 236 4353

Reindeer Mask Decorating
 Sun,
 Creative Coffee Hub, Birmingham, B29 6HJ.
 Call 01215727300

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Sit Down and get up for James gig



Tim Booth, centre, as James play one of the festival dates that have made them perennial British rock scene favourites

MANCHESTER indie rock heroes James are in concert at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on Wednesday, following their most successful year since the band reunited in 2007.

The festival favourites fronted by Tim Booth, who first got together in 1982, have won a loyal legion of fans with such rock anthems as Sit Down, Come Home, Sound and She's A Star.

The band's latest album, *Girl At The End Of The World*, went straight into the UK album charts at no2, second only to Adele.

Glastonbury

In a career yielding 14 studio albums, the group has sold more than 12 millions albums worldwide and have become regulars on the festival

circuit, including V and this year's Glastonbury.

Yorkshire-born frontman Booth, a former Shrewsbury School pupil, is now based in California. "We moved here to take some of that Californian laid back optimism," says Booth. "It's starting to seep in. It takes a while to get over the more wired English edginess that is still probably with us."



'I'm always pushing myself as an artist'

Encore for Roachford

ANDREW Roachford arrived on the UK music scene in the late 1980s with the hits *Cuddly Toy* and *Family Man* as the linchpin of the band that carried his surname.

Raised in south London to West Indian parents, he was born into a musical family and first hit the road at the age of 14 gigging with his jazz saxophonist uncle Bill Roachford.

"I was in the middle of that whole jazz scene which was an interesting education," he says. "It taught me musically, how to listen and how to entertain. My uncle always told me that you had to give people a show."

Signed to a seven-album deal with Columbia Records, Roachford went on to become that record label's biggest selling domestic act for more than ten years.

Andrew Roachford also became an in-demand songwriter for such as Michael Jackson and Chaka Khan.

Recent years have seen him writing and singing on top selling dance tracks and touring with Mike And The Mechanics.

"I'm always pushing myself as an artist," he says. "When it comes to songwriting, I naturally gravitate to digging deep. That's how it works for me."

His latest album, *Encore*, was released in the summer and his latest single was a funk-up version of Bill Withers soul classic *Ain't No Sunshine*.

Roachford is in concert at Bilston's Robin 2 venue on Tuesday. Support comes from Birmingham singer-songwriter Rosie O'Sullivan.

Civic in comedy heroes hat-trick

IT'S a big week for comedy with Catherine Tate following up her show at the Barclaycard Arena last night (Wednesday) by bringing such characters as Nan Taylor, Georgie Georgie and, if she can be bothered, sulky teenager Lauren Cooper to Wolverhampton Civic Hall tomorrow (Friday). She will be assisted by Gavin & Stacey actor Mathew Horne.

Gag-machine Jimmy Carr brings his 'Best of, Ultimate, Gold, Greatest Hits Tour' to the Civic for consecutive nights on Saturday and Sunday. The Last Leg regular Josh Widdicombe completes a comedy hat-trick for the Civic on December 8.

Keep Dancing with Louis and Robin

STRICTLY speaking it's not officially endorsed by a certain Beeb ballroom blockbuster, but fans of fancy movers may well enjoy *Keep On Dancing* at New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, December 10.

The Birmingham venue hosts a latin and ballroom dancing spectacular featuring 2012 *Strictly Come Dancing* winner and Olympic gymnast Louis Smith. Among the professional dancers is former *Strictly* favourite Robin Windsor.

With guest singers between the jives, tangos and salsas, the show is from the same team behind hit shows *Spirit Of The Dance* and *Puttin' On The Ritz*.

Jam packed with hits at the Robin

MORE than a tribute band, From The Jam featuring original Jam bassist Bruce Foxton will play all his former band's singles, including B sides, at the Robin 2 in Bilston on Saturday night.

Other key gigs include Brum shoegazers Jaws back home in Digbeth at the Rainbow Warehouse tomorrow (Friday).

Heavy metal outfit Bullet for My Valentine focus on new album *Venom* at the O2 Academy, Birmingham, on Tuesday, returning the following night to perform 2005 album *The Poison*. Influential rockers Pixies have sold out O2 Academy on Thursday, December 8.

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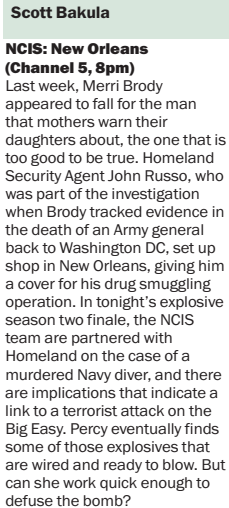
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DIGITAL



12.15 Film: Dragonfly. (2002) **1.55**
Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.00** BBC
News

12.15 Film: *Ill Manors*. (2012) **2.10** This is BBC Two

12.45 Jackpot 247. **3.00** ITV
Nightscreen

1.20 Hollyhocks. (R) **3.25** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.20** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. (R) **5.15** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It. (R)

escape from him. Fact-based crime drama, with Nicolas Cage. **12.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** The Boy Who Can't Stay Awake. (R) **4.00** Celebrity Botched Up Bodies. (R) **4.50** House Doctor. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

E4
11.30 The Goldbergs **1.30** Film: Clueless (1995) **3.30** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **3.50** The Big Bang Theory **7.20** Film: The Twilight Saga: New Moon (2009) **10.00** Tattoo Fixers **11.00** Gogglebox **12.05** The Inbetweeners **1.10** Rude Tube **3.10** New Girl **4.55** Revenge

Film4
11.00 20 Million Miles to Earth (1957)
1.00 Epic (2013) **3.55** Carry On Constable (1960) **4.50** Congo (1995)
7.05 Men in Black (1997) **9.00** Taken 2 (2012) **10.50** Horns (2013) **1.10** Hellboy (2004) **1.35** Close

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CHOICE



Ant and Dec
I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! (ITV, 9pm)

It is now 21 long days since this year's batch of famous faces - Adam Thomas, Carol Vorderman, Joel Dommett, Jordan Banjo, Larry Lamb, Lisa Snowdon, Ola Jordan, Sam Quek, Scarlett Moffatt and Wayne Bridge - entered the New South Wales jungle. Tonight, Ant and Dec present the final of the celebrity survival challenge as the last remaining celebs complete their ordeal. As usual the presenters will be springing a few last-day surprises on the contestants, including, no doubt, the infamous annual eating challenge and another daily task. Which of the final line-up will succeed Vicky Pattison and be crowned King or Queen of the Jungle this evening?

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Fern Britton Meets Nigel Benn. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News. **Weather**. **1.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **1.45** FA Cup Final Score. **4.20** Planet Earth II. (R) **5.20** Songs of Praise. **5.55** BBC News. **6.10** Regional Programme. **6.20** **Countryfile**. The team explores Lincolnshire, where John Craven meets a farmer harvesting sprouts in time for Christmas and finds out about an attempt to cross-breed the traditional festive vegetable with kale. Anita Rani discovers how robots are being used to pull up weeds, reducing the need for chemicals, and Ellie Harrison visits abandoned RAF buildings that are now home to bats. Including weather for the week ahead. **7.20** **Strictly Come Dancing: The Results**. Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman present the results of last night's show and reveal who will not be going through to the semi-finals. Featuring music from Elaine Paige. **8.00** **Planet Earth II**. Wildlife that inhabit the world's grasslands, exploring how animals adapt to survive in areas that endure some of the most dramatic seasonal changes seen in the world. **9.00** **My Mother and Other Strangers**. Rose's sister Vera arrives in Moybeg for her annual visit and takes a liking to Captain Dreyfuss, forcing Rose to open up about her feelings for the American officer. **10.00** BBC News. **10.20** Regional Programme. **10.30** Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, as Bournemouth faced Liverpool at the Vitality Stadium and Everton hosted Manchester United at Goodison Park. **11.35** **Sunny D**. Dane dreads having to introduce Nicola's father, who despises him, to his own parents. The meeting is made even more stressful when it clashes with a work football match. **11.55** **Citizen Khan**. Mir Khan wants to meet Aida's boyfriend's parents, but finds the boy is nervous at the prospect - leading to a sweaty confrontation in a sauna. (R) **12.25** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.30** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 The A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **6.45** Big Dreams Small Spaces. (R) **7.45** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **8.15** Carol Klein's Plant Odysseys. (R) **8.45** Countryfile. (R) **9.45** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.15** International Rugby Union. (R) **12.15** MOTD Extra. **1.00** Live Snooker: UK Championship. Coverage of the opening session of the final from York. **6.00** **MOTD: FA Cup Highlights**. Manish Bhasin presents action from the second-round matches, which saw the remaining 40 teams battle it out for a potentially lucrative spot in round three. Matches included Bolton Wanderers v Sheffield United at the Macron Stadium, Millwall v Braintree Town at the Den, Port Vale v Hartlepool at Vale Park and Charlton Athletic v Milton Keynes Dons at the Valley. **7.00** **Live Snooker: UK Championship**. Coverage of the second session of the final from the Barbican Centre in York, as the tournament widely regarded as the second-most prestigious on the calendar concludes. Australia's Neil Robertson emerged triumphant in the showpiece match at last year's event, as he capitalised on a 5-3 lead from the opening session by going on to lift the trophy with a 10-5 victory. Presented by Hazel Irvine, with a commentary team that includes Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor, and John Virgo. Subsequent programmes are subject to change. **11.00** **QI XL**. David Mitchell, Noel Fielding and Holly Walsh join Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig to contemplate questions on the theme of "night" in an extended edition of the panel show. **11.45** **Jazzie B's 1980s: From Dole To Soul**. The Soul II Soul frontman opens up about the decade that made his career, and the against-the-odds story of a young black British musician who became a chart-topping artist. (R) **12.45** **Film: Three Fugitives**. (1989) A reformed bank robber is an innocent bystander in a heist, but when he is assumed to be guilty he goes on the run with the actual crook. Comedy, with Nick Nolte and Martin Short. **2.20** Sign Zone: Countryfile. The team explores the Brecon Beacons. (R) **3.15** Holby City. Matteo's arrival irritates Jac. (R) **4.15** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.25** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.30** Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Looped. **8.30** Scrambled!: Thunderbirds Are Go. **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Bear Grylls Survival School. **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** Best Walks with a View with Julia Bradbury. (R) **11.30** Let's Do Christmas with Gino & Mel. (R) **12.30** ITV News. **Weather**. **12.35** The Chase. (R) **1.35** The X Factor. (R) **3.05** Midsomer Murders. (R) **5.00** Tipping Point. (R) **6.00** Regional Programme. **Weather**. **6.15** ITV News. **Weather**. **6.30** **Off Their Rockers**. Louie Spence checks out Seb's dancing skills. **7.00** **The Next Great Magician**. The Wanted's Tom Parker and the cast of TOWIE are on hand to assist another group of magicians with their performances, which include mind-reading and levitation acts. **8.00** **The X Factor**. Dermot O'Leary reveals which acts are guaranteed a place in next week's final. The remaining performers must compete in a sing-off before one more is eliminated from the contest. **9.00** **I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!** Ant and Dec present the final of the 16th series, as the remaining three famous faces take on the last challenges in the Australian jungle. Viewers' votes will decide who has been this year's favourite contestant, and when the results are in, this year's King or Queen of the Jungle will be crowned, before the last handful of contestants return home. The presenters will be catching up with the contestants later in the week for a special follow-up show as they return to normal life after the hardships of the Bush. **10.35** ITV News. **Weather**. **10.50** Peston on Sunday. (R) **11.50** Premiership Rugby Union. Highlights from the 10th round of fixtures, which included Sale Sharks v Exeter Chiefs. **12.40** Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 The King of Queens. (R) **6.35** The King of Queens. (R) **7.00** The King of Queens. (R) **7.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie's Cracking Christmas. (R) **1.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.55** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.20** The Simpsons. (R) **2.50** The Simpsons. (R) **3.20** Film: School of Rock. (2003) Comedy, starring Jack Black. **5.35** Film: Miracle on 34th Street. (1994) Christmas family drama remake, with Richard Attenborough. **7.35** Channel 4 News. **8.00** **Escape to the Chateau**. Fresh from the success of hosting a three-day wedding at the chateau, Dick and Angel make business plans for the grounds, intending to charge people to fish in the moat and forage in the woods. Angel starts work on a second guest suite, but also wants to install an elevator, which pushes Dick's engineering skills to the limit. **9.00** **Humans**. Athena challenges Milo about his unethical plans, and is shocked to discover the true extent of the tycoon's ambitions. Max decides to start a new community of synthys, and takes matters into his own hands when he learns how far Leo is prepared to go in pursuit of his goals. Mattie is not sure who to trust with her secret, and Mia has a revelation that has shocking consequences for the Hawkins family. **10.00** **Gogglebox**. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R) **11.05** **8 Out of 10 Cats**. Irreverent panel show hosted by Jimmy Carr, in which two teams answer questions based on opinion polls to see who best understands what is going on in Britain today. (R) **12.05** The Last Leg. A comic review of the past seven days. (R) **1.00** 60 Days in Jail. Department store security guard Jeff enters as the last volunteer. (R) **1.50** Film: A Pigeon Sat on a Branch. Reflecting on Existence. (2014) Comedy, starring Holger Andersson and Nils Westblom. **3.35** Shipping Wars UK. (R) **4.10** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. A project to transform a Victorian railway signal box into a summerhouse. (R) **5.05** Location, Location, Location. Kirstie and Phil search for homes in Cambridgeshire. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Monkey. **6.05** Milkshake! Bop Box. (R) **6.10** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.15** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.25** Bots the Builder. (R) **6.40** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.50** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.00** Seaside Antics. (R) **7.05** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.15** Pip Ahoy! (R) **7.30** Little Princess. (R) **7.45** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.05** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **8.30** Noddy in Toyland. (R) **8.45** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.55** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.35** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.45** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.30** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.50** Funniest Fails, Fails & Flops. **12.20** Film: The 12 Gifts of Christmas. (2015) Premiere. Comedy, starring Katrina Law. **2.05** Film: Call Me Claus. (2001) Christmas family drama, starring Whoopi Goldberg. **3.50** Film: Deck the Halls. (2006) Christmas comedy, starring Danny DeVito and Matthew Broderick. **5.45** News Weekend. **5.50** Film: Bulletproof Monk. (2003) Martial arts thriller, starring Chow Yun-Fat. **7.40** Film: Hellboy II: The Golden Army. (2008) The demon superhero, aided by a team from the Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defence, leads the fight against renegade elf Prince Nuada who is intent on reawakening an unstoppable robot army and bringing about the demise of mankind. Action fantasy sequel directed by Guillermo del Toro, starring Ron Perlman, Selma Blair, Doug Jones and Luke Goss. Edited for violence and language. Includes 5 News Update at 8.40pm. **10.00** Film: Green Lantern. (2011) Premiere. A pilot joins a galactic peacekeeping force with incredible powers and defends Earth from an alien attack. Sci-fi adventure, starring Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively. Includes 5 News Update at 11pm. **12.15** Film: Zoolander. (2001) A dim male model's career starts to decline and he fails to realise he is a pawn in a dangerous game of international espionage. Comedy, starring Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson. **1.50** SuperCasino. Live interactive gaming. **3.10** Tour de Celeb. Eight familiar faces train to tackle one of the toughest stages of the Tour de France. (R) **4.00** Tattoo Disasters UK. (R) **4.50** House Doctor. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. Flash tries to avoid being kicked out of Silver Hatch. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 The Flying Archaeologist **7.30** Britten's Endgame **9.30** The Turner Prize 2016: The Nominees **10.00** Storyville: Forever Pure - Football and Racism in Jerusalem **11.25** Cosmonauts: How Russia Won the Space Race **12.55** Monkey Planet **1.55** Blink: A Horizon Guide to the Senses **2.55** Egypt's Lost Queens **3.55** Close
ITV2
11.25 The X Factor **1.00** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! **2.00** Film: Beethoven's Christmas Adventure (2011) **3.50** Film: The Polar Express (2004) **5.50** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! **6.50** Film: The Incredible Hulk (2008) **9.00** The Xtra Factor Live **10.00** Family Guy **10.35** I'm a Celebrity: Extra Camp **11.35** Family Guy **12.35** American Dad! **1.30** The Cleveland Show
ITV3
12.45 Film: Columbus: Dagger of the Mind (1972) **2.50** Film: The Nun's Story (1959) **3.55** FYI Daily **4.00** Film: The Nun's Story (1959) **5.50** Foyle's War **6.00** Lewis **10.00** Alexander Armstrong's Land of the Midnight Sun **11.00** A Touch of Frost **1.00** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie (1985) **2.05** FYI Daily **2.10** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie (1985) **3.00** May the Best House Win **4.40** Wycliffe
ITV4
11.00 Cash Cowboys **12.00** Pawn Stars **12.55** Film: All Quiet on the Western Front (1979) **1.55** FYI Daily **2.00** Film: All Quiet on the Western Front (1979) **4.00** Film: Tobruk (1967) **5.00** FYI Daily **5.05** Film: Tobruk (1967) **6.10** Film: Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment (1985) **7.10** FYI Daily **7.15** Film: Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment (1985) **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union **9.00** Film: Jaws 3 (1983) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** Film: Jaws 3 (1983) **11.50** Film: Rambo III (1988) **1.10** Fishing Impossible **2.10** Hell on Wheels
E4
11.30 Made in Chelsea **12.35** First Dates Abroad **1.30** Film: Addams Family Values (1993) **3.25** Rude (sh) Tube Shorts **3.30** The Goldbergs **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: The Mechanic (2011) **10.50** Tattoo Fixers **11.50** The Inbetweeners **12.55** Rude Tube **2.30** Tattoo Fixers
Film4
11.00 The Three Stooges (2012) **1.00** Miracle on 34th Street (1947) **2.55** The Rugrats Movie (1999) **4.30** City of Ember (2008) **6.15** Clear and Present Danger (1994) **9.00** Men in Black II (2002) **10.45** A Time to Kill (1996) **1.40** Wild Bill (2011) **3.50** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Hats Off to Christmas!, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A small-town hat shop employee resents being asked to train her boss's son for a job she wants for herself, but warms to him when he shows an interest in helping her son with a project. However, she remains doubtful whether he can be relied on, a suspicion that seems confirmed when he is tempted to leave for New York. Romantic drama, with Haylie Duff. (2013)

TUESDAY

Mystery Road, BBC1, 12am

An Aboriginal Australian detective returns to his home town in the Outback to investigate the murder of a teenager. He finds himself treated as an outsider by the local police, but also ostracised by his own community – including the daughter he left behind. Murder mystery, starring Aaron Pedersen. (2013)



Junior, Friday, ITV, 10.40pm

WEDNESDAY

Defending Santa, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A small-town sheriff finds a man asleep in the woods who claims to be Santa Claus. The mysterious stranger goes to court to prove he is who he claims to be, leading to an increase in Christmas spirit among the locals and romance between the lawman and the defence attorney. Festive drama, starring Dean Cain, Bill Lewis and Jodie Sweetin. (2013)

THURSDAY

Christmas Confession, Channel 5, 3.15pm

When a struggling actress returns to her hometown for Christmas, a holiday romance makes her realise the life she left behind may be better than the one she has started in New York. Romantic drama, starring Sarah Lancaster and Garry Chalk. (2015)

FRIDAY

Junior, ITV, 10.40pm

A fertility expert pioneers a treatment enabling men to become pregnant and carry babies to full term. When the authorities cancel funding for the research, he decides to test it on himself, but gives little thought to how difficult it will be to keep it a secret. The situation is further complicated when he starts to fall for the woman whose child he is carrying. Comedy, with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito. (1994)

Duo look to hit all the right notes Together

Michael Ball and Alfie Boe. At first glance, it looks like an odd pairing. Both of them have hugely successful careers, so why would they team up? Why not carry on going it alone and take sole credit for all their achievements?

Well, as they say, two's company. Being on the road is lonely, so having somebody with you who understands the rigours involved is probably rather pleasant. This duo also seem to enjoy the banter that can ensue.

During their recent gigs, they have poked fun at the drama surrounding the US Presidential election. Admittedly, it's not exactly high-class satire, but it's an awful lot more interesting than just some bloke standing there belting out a big tune.

Both Ball and Boe are noted for their vocal talents and charisma, but they're not the huge egos that some stars tend to be, which is probably another reason why they work together so well. They have an easy charm and common touch that appeals to people of both sexes and all classes.

Their detractors claim they are both too cheeky for their own good – although with millions of record sales between them, you could argue that their demeanours have worked a treat for them so far. Besides, neither of them seem to care – in fact, there's even a sense of ironic self-awareness within their performances.

Boe and Ball have recently released a joint album, which is rather obviously titled Together, and now they appear to be joined at the hip, having appeared on the Strictly Come Dancing results show a few weeks back; they're also touring the nation as we speak.

But now they're heading for a TV near you courtesy of this one-off programme.

"We've got an album, we've got a tour and now we've got an ITV special," says Ball. "You can't get better than that. We have some great material to share with the viewers; I can't wait to get started."

Boe adds: "We had such a laugh making the album, making our own

TV show is going to be great. Make sure you tune in for some special performances."

The boys' album features their own unique takes on such classic tunes as For Once in My Life, When You Wish Upon a Star and You'll Never Walk Alone. On tour they've added the likes of Ain't That a Kick in the Head and Tell Me It's Not True.

Expect at least some of those to appear here, alongside a medley of songs from Les Miserables.

Joining them on stage will be singer-songwriter Rick Astley as well as Olivier Award-winning performer Maria Friedman, who counts appearances in Chicago, Ragtime and Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat on her resume, although most viewers will recognise her from her stint as Elaine Peacock in EastEnders.

It promises to be wonderful night of entertainment, and just remember – two is better than one, which means we should get double the fun from this duo.



Ball and Boe: One Night Only, Friday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Brits Icon – Robbie Williams

ITV, 9pm

Elton John and David Bowie. What they have in common? They're legends, of course. Bona fide superstars whose songs have become classics; they're also the only two previous winners of the Brit Icon award. Adding his name to that list is Robbie Williams. Now, we don't want to criticise the Robster, but few would regard him quite so highly as the aforementioned duo, and therefore might suggest that he doesn't deserve to be regarded alongside such luminaries. However, he's won more Brit awards than anybody else in history – 18 in total, if you count the five he won with Take That and his Icon trophy. To celebrate, Williams plays a special gig featuring highlights from new album The Heavy Entertainment Show, as well as a few old favourites, and there's a look back at archive footage from throughout his music career.

TUESDAY

This Is Us

Channel 4, 9pm

Do you believe in star signs? If not, this new drama series may leave you wondering if your date of birth does have some influence over your life after all, as it explores the interweaving existences of a variety

of individuals who share the same birthday – and more besides. In the first episode, Jack is determined that his wife Rebecca should celebrate her birthday, even if she is a bit preoccupied with the fact that she's pregnant with triplets. Meanwhile, Randall marks his special day by tracking down his absent father, and sitcom star Kevin and his twin sister Kate are dealing with personal crises of their own. The impressive ensemble cast includes Mandy Moore, Milo Ventimiglia and Sterling K Brown, who recently won an Emmy for The People v OJ Simpson.

WEDNESDAY

In Plain Sight

ITV, 9pm

New series. Drama series set in 1955 based on the true story of Lanarkshire detective William Muncie's quest to bring to justice notorious Scottish killer Peter Manuel. With Manuel having been released from prison after a nine-year sentence for housebreaking and sexual assaults, he attacks a young woman and keeps her with him in an open field for most of the night before returning to

his home, and Muncie is convinced further crimes are certain to be committed.

Big Life Fix with Simon Reeve

BBC2, 9pm

New series. Simon Reeve and a team of inventors try to help people in need, creating solutions to everyday problems, beginning with a terminally ill photographer who can no longer use his hands to operate a camera. They attempt to bring cutting-edge technology to a remote Welsh village which has no internet access and an unreliable telephone connection, and give some control back to a young designer who has Parkinson's disease and who has been unable to use a pen since developing tremors in her hands two years ago.



Brits Icon – Robbie Williams, Monday, ITV, 9pm

THURSDAY

Grand Designs:

House of the Year

Channel 4, 9pm

Kevin McCloud is encroaching

on George Clarke's Amazing Spaces territory this week, as he turns his attention to five properties which have made clever use of small sites. Among the places in the running for the title of House of the Year 2016 is an ultra-stylish one bedroom space for living and working, which boasts an experimental garden roof. Kevin discovers how a dark mews has become a light and airy home, visits a Dungeness house that combines beach living with high architecture, and calls in on a particularly ingenious extension in Harrogate. He also learns how a narrow beachfront garage has made over into a stunning house with enough room for an extensive art collection.

FRIDAY

Friday Night Supper Club

Channel 4, 11.55pm

No, this is not a spin-off from the popular sitcom Friday Night Dinner. Instead, it's a competition between six of Britain's hottest chefs, who go head-to-head in a post-pub showdown. Alex Szrok, Imran Bashir, Elizabeth Allen, Andrea Michelin, James Cochran and Lee Tiernan are the culinary geniuses taking part, and they'll be whipping up tasty, inventive new dishes that can be easily replicated by using everyday staple ingredients, including chicken, beef and rhubarb.

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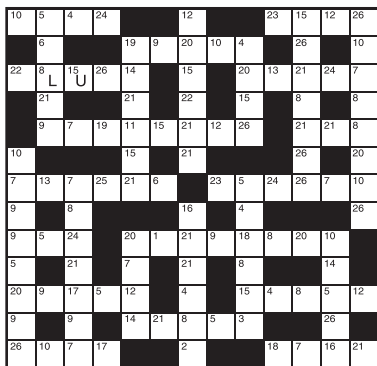
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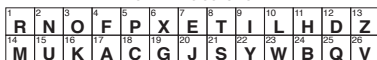
BRAIN GYM No.406

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

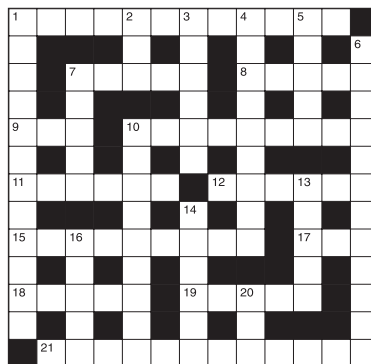
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Dexterous chief assistants (5-4,3)
- He gives an alternative to the fellow (5)
- Don't drop the fish (5)
- Manage to take part in the sports (3)
- Food at the back of the meadow for the bird (9)
- An idea for making her toy (6)
- A name for the warden? (6)
- Round which people hold hands (4,5)
- Part of a delectable inflorescent garland (3)
- Heather and I surrounded by unusual care (5)
- It's produced by one strange tree (5)
- Below the proceeds for certain contracts (12)

Down

- No voucher for the single-minded! (6,6)
- Barrel of fruit upturned (3)
- The Marine is confused by those who fly over (6)
- Lack of vigour of French modulation (9)
- Rate revision is about ten more (5)
- They produce revolutionary devices (12)
- Study the south-east - it's thickly populated (5)
- Splendid speed one attains in bottom gear? (5-4)
- Get better for the reunion (5)
- The aim is to protest (6)
- The first of the governors in control as a rule! (5)
- Its apple is a gall (3)



Quick Clues:

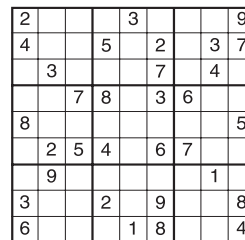
Across

- Dumb (12)
- At that point (5)
- Corn (5)
- Tear (3)
- Powerlessness (9)
- Stimulate (6)
- Bog (6)
- Enrage (9)
- Fire-arm (3)
- String (5)
- Below (5)
- Cleverness (12)

Down

- Middle (12)
- Part of foot (3)
- Hair-raising (6)
- Merry (9)
- Retinue (5)
- Ill-timed (12)
- Subject (5)
- Mediate (9)
- Wrath (5)
- By hand (6)
- Sham (5)
- Excavate (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

3	4	7	6	2	8	9	5	1
6	8	9	3	5	1	4	2	7
1	2	5	4	9	7	6	8	3
9	5	4	1	6	3	8	7	2
7	6	2	5	8	9	1	3	4
8	1	3	2	7	4	5	9	6
5	7	1	8	4	2	3	6	9
4	9	8	7	3	6	2	1	5
2	3	6	9	1	5	7	4	8

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Epitaph; 8 Alight; 9 Joining; 10 Tacked; 11 Idlers; 12 Foresail; 18 Listener; 20 Sooner; 21 Forage; 22 Arrange; 23 Talent; 24 Secrets. Down: 1 Mastiff; 2 Discard; 3 Sheets; 5 Profiles; 6 Tingle; 7 Penury; 13 All right; 14 Engaged; 15 Arrests; 16 Course; 17 Unfair; 19 Trojan. QUICK - Across: 4 Disease; 8 Runner; 9 Achieve; 10 Valley; 11 Decant; 12 Inactive; 18 Catholic; 20 Bursar; 21 Intact; 22 Illegal; 23 Serene; 24 Snippet. Down: 1 Prevail; 2 Unclean; 3 Reject; 5 Incident; 6 Evince; 7 Saving; 13 Increase; 14 Gleaned; 15 Scatter; 16 Sullen; 17 Asleep; 19 Hunger.

Quiz

- Who was born Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon?
- On which island is the Foreign Legion's main base?
- Which Bond producer died in September 1994?
- What are divided into tropical, continental and rain-shadow?
- What type of plant is traveller's joy?
- Who composed The Dream of Gerontius?
- Who wrote The Seagull?
- Which group had a UK hit single in 1996 with Virtual Insanity?
- What is an ondes Martenot?
- To what did Rangoon change its name in 1989?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Josiah Spode; 2 Saltpetre or nitre;

3 Estonia; 4 Mario Andretti;

5 Opportunity Knocks; 6 Penicillin; 7 A;

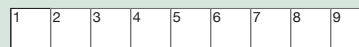
8 Turnip; 9 Virgo; 10 Snake.

Niner: DISMANTLE

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

936875 gives a vegetable,
1449 gives a second vegetable,
248972 gives a pulse.



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It's tea time at Bettys Cafe Tea Rooms



Glorious – the nave at York Minster



Castle Howard – Vanbrugh's mansion was TV's Brideshead



The Shambles pictured during the annual autumn Illuminating York festival

Just my cup of tea – there's nowt better than York for a city break

By Leon Burakowski

THE ancient capital of northern England was known to the Romans as Eboracum, to the Vikings as Jorvik. But we know it as York, an historic city that has remained vibrant and fashionable.

It is one of Britain's great city break destinations with something for everyone – whether a history buff, a shop-til-you-drop consumer or a connoisseur of good pubs and quality restaurants.

The foremost must-see sight is the colossal York Minster. It is 500 feet long, 100 feet wide with a central tower 200 feet high. Taking more than 250 years to build, it first opened for worship more than 500 years ago. It is the largest medieval gothic cathedral north of the Alps and the magnificent edifice is more than matched by a glorious interior with impressive stained glass windows.

Nearby is the Shambles with its medieval half-timbered buildings tilting towards each other. It is said to have inspired Harry Potter's Diagon Alley. It is the most famous street in a city that has a labyrinth of snickelways and ginnels, passages best experienced when darkness falls and you can join one of several ghost walks.

There are more than three kilometres of city

walls to explore or take a boat trip on the River Ouse. You can spend days delving into the past at the Yorkshire, York Castle or National Railway museums. Experience 10th century life at Jorvik Viking Centre with its costumed inhabitants.

For those with a sweet-tooth, York's Chocolate Story tells of the city's famous confectionery families, Craven, Terry and Rowntree, with tastings.

A trip to York is not complete without visiting Bettys, a Yorkshire institution. The uniformed staff serve a range of teas in the proper old fashioned way. The formidable afternoon tea has three tiers of delicious savoury sandwiches, scones with jam and cream, and array of divine cakes. Tea in the elegant art deco surroundings of the cafe tea-rooms on St Helen's Square is a treat – and you can take home a packet of Bettys own special tea blend.

Just a short drive from the city is Castle Howard, familiar from TV and film as the home of the Flytes in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. It is one of the finest stately homes in Britain. The monuments on the road to the mansion declare you are approaching somewhere special.

Built in the 1700s by Sir John Vanbrugh for the Earl of Carlisle and his family, the Howards, it is full of antiquities and artworks that the Howards brought to their palace in the hills. The Great Hall is breathtakingly impressive. The informative exhibition reveals that the Howards had lives every bit as dramatic as the Flytes.

Moors

North Yorkshire Moors Railway steams through forests and heathlands from the market town of Pickering to the old fishing port of Whitby. Harry Potter fans may recognise the remote station Goathland as Hogsmeade, station for Hogwarts.

Whitby is famous for its gothic abbey ruins, where Count Dracula took refuge on arrival in England in Bram Stoker's novel. Thus it is a magnet for goths who explore the graveyard of St Mary's, where the headstones of long dead mariners have weathered into coral-like patterns. It's 199 steps down to the town to buy the local Jet black jewellery or visit the house where explorer Captain Cook learned his craft. Whatever you do, don't leave Whitby without enjoying a fish and chip supper. There's nowt better.

FACT FILE

When planning a trip to York see www.visitthecityofyork.org website. The York Pass, available for one, two or three days, provides admission to more than 30 attractions in York and North Yorkshire, giving a major saving for those on the tourist trail. To buy a York Pass or for more information contact York Visitor Information Centre on 01904 550099, email info@yorkpass.com or visit www.yorkpass.com

For further information on Bettys see www.bettys.co.uk/tea-rooms/locations/york and an online shopping service is available at www.bettys.co.uk

York Christmas Festival and St Nicholas Fair runs until December 23. See www.visitthecityofyork.org/christmas for details. Other useful websites include www.castlehoward.co.uk and www.nymr.co.uk

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Spacious terraced home is superbly presented

Superbly modernised and presented to a high standard, this deceptively spacious terraced home in Colley Lane, Halesowen, includes a high spec refitted breakfast kitchen and refitted bathroom.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £119,950. It also has a utility room with a guests cloakroom/WC off, three double bedrooms, gas central

HALESOWEN

£119,950

heating and double glazing and a large lounge/dining room and a courtyard garden.

In more detail the lounge/dining room has laminate-style flooring and a window overlooking the front.

The breakfast kitchen has recently installed high gloss units, a fitted oven with five gas ring hob and stainless steel cooker hood over, appliance space and laminate style flooring.

For further information or to book that all important viewing, please contact Hicks Hadley on 0121 585 6667 or visit www.hickshadley.com

Appealing three-bed home, ideal for modern family

DUDLEY

£146,950

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A most appealing, three-bedroomed modern-style semi-detached family home in Minehead Road, Dudley, has just joined the property market.

It is for sale through Taylors at £146,950 with the huge advantage of having no chain.

With gas central heating and double glazing its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hall, a sitting room with a good sized dining area, as well as a beam-effect to the ceiling and walls and a feature inglenook-style fireplace, an L-shaped breakfast kitchen with plenty of modern light-wood-effect units with a pantry, three bedrooms and a bathroom.

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HALESOWEN, Springfield Road£1,450 pcm+Fees
A unique extended detached residence in this very convenient location. This lovely property has 3 reception rooms, large kitchen/dining area with breakfast bar, downstairs w.c., 5 double bedrooms (2 with French doors leading to balcony overlooking garden, beautiful bathroom with separate shower, large rear garden, driveway and double garage. Also features: CCTV, full 24-hour alarm system, bathroom with sauna/steam room & Jacuzzi bath. EPC: TBG



HALESOWEN, Huntlands Road£800 pcm+Fees
Beautiful views overlooking Canal! This lovely 3 bedroom semi-detached property located in this very popular location close to schools & bus routes. Featuring: Large reception room, refurbished modern kitchen/dining area, downstairs cloakroom, 3 good size bedrooms (2 with wardrobes) refurbished modern bathroom with separate corner shower cubicle, mature private rear garden, garage & driveway parking, new gas central heating, double glazed and alarmed. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Sunbury Road£795 pcm+Fees
A superbly presented modern detached family home in central Halesowen, perfect for Windsor & Earls High School & Halesowen College. Featuring a spacious lounge/dining area, conservatory, fitted kitchen, downstairs cloakroom, 3 good size bedrooms & family bathroom on the 1st floor. The property has a driveway for 2 cars & garage, gas central heating, double glazing and a lovely garden to the rear overlooking Windsor High School playing fields. EPC: C



KIDDERMINSTER, Grosvenor Avenue£795 pcm+Fees
Stunning 3 storey semi detached town house in a quiet cul-de-sac position within walking distance of Kidderminster train station. Completely refurbished to a very high standard. Front reception room, lounge with feature fireplace with wood-burner, modern fitted kitchen with appliances. Three large double bedrooms, beautiful bathroom with separate shower cubicle and a roll edged cleared foot free standing bath. Not to be missed! EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Inkberrow Road£750 pcm+Fees
A 3/4 bedroom town house located in central Halesowen on the popular Huntlands estate comprising of: modern fitted kitchen, large living room, 3 double bedrooms plus bedroom 4/5study, gas central heating, double glazed throughout, bathroom with shower, driveway for 3/4 vehicles, garage, private rear garden. Not to be missed! EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Bethesda Gardens£750 pcm+Fees
Located in a quiet residential area, is this modern 4 bedroom link detached home close to Colley Lane primary school, local amenities and within the catchment area of Windsor High School, comprising of: 4 bedrooms, 2 with en-suites, house bathroom with hair wash facility, modern lounge with feature fireplace, large kitchen with dining area, front and rear gardens, driveway and garage parking. EPC: C



STOURBRIDGE, Renfrew Close£695 pcm+Fees
Situating on a sought after estate. This lovely 3 bed semi detached house features a large reception room, fitted kitchen with a washing machine and dishwasher, 2 double bedrooms and 1 single bedroom, house bathroom with shower, front and rear gardens, 2 car driveway and garage. EPC: D



BRIERLEY HILL, Walker Avenue£675 pcm+Fees
UNDERGOING A REFURBISHMENT! A modern semi-detached house offering spacious family, accommodation comprising of: entrance hallway, large lounge, fitted kitchen, 3 good sized bedrooms, new bathroom with shower, driveway parking & garage. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Long Innage£675 pcm+Fees
UNDERGOING A REFURBISHMENT! A modern link detached family home in this most popular location, having spacious accommodation comprising large lounge, fitted kitchen, rear garden with decking, 3 good sized bedrooms, family bathroom with corner bath & separate shower, driveway parking & garage. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Rossendale Close£650 pcm+Fees
A lovely 2 bedroom semi detached bungalow in a quiet cul-de-sac, newly decorated & carpeted. Also ideal for the number 9 bus in to Stourbridge, Halesowen and Birmingham. Featuring modern fitted kitchen with oven/hob, large lounge, conservatory, 2 good size bedrooms, bathroom with shower, driveway & private rear garden. EPC: D



STOURBRIDGE, Ryder Street£650 pcm+Fees
Semi-detached and spacious 2 bedroom traditional house in this very popular location close to all transport links and King George V park. Featuring entrance hallway, lounge, kitchen with appliances/dining area, conservatory, rear garden, 2 good size bedrooms, family bathroom, driveway for 3 cars. EPC: TBG



BARTLEY GREEN, Woodgate Gardens£625 pcm+Fees
Improved & deceptively large end terraced house, newly carpeted with entrance porch, hallway, large lounge, downstairs WC, kitchen/dining area with patio doors leading to garden, 3 good size bedrooms, shower room, off road parking. EPC: D



HAGLEY, Newlands Close £595 pcm+Fees
A superb modern ground floor apartment located near to Hagley Village & situated close to motorway links, open plan lounge/ kitchen with appliances, double bedroom with fitted wardrobes and en-suite shower room & 1 large single bedroom, white bathroom suite, 1 allocated parking space, secure entry system. Not to be missed! EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Bethesda Gardens£575 pcm+Fees
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STOURBRIDGE, Villa Street£500 pcm+Fees
A beautiful ground floor modern apartment which can either be furnished or unfurnished. Newly available with open plan lounge/kitchen with modern range of fitted units, breakfast bar & integrated appliances, 1 double bedroom, bathroom with separate shower, 1 designated car parking space to rear of property, communal gardens. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Whitehall Court£495 pcm+Fees
Centrally located to Halesowen Town Centre is this well presented 1st floor flat with private entrance, hallway, kitchen with appliances, living room, bathroom with newly fitted shower, 2 good size bedrooms, communal garden & secure parking to rear of property. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Richmond Court£450 pcm+Fees
A unfurnished 1 bed 1st floor apartment close to Halesowen Town Centre and bus links. Featuring kitchen with integrated appliances, living room, lovely modern shower room, electric storage heating and on road parking. This property is close to Huntington Park and a few minutes drive to Halesowen Town. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Stourbridge Road£425 pcm+Fees
A 2 bed unfurnished split level flat above a shop within walking distance of the town centre with easy access to buses. Comprising of: large living room, 2 bedrooms, shower room, good size kitchen/diner located on a separate level, gas central heating, double glazing and rear garden. EPC: E



BRIERLEY HILL, Norwood Road£425 pcm+Fees
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STOURBRIDGE, Bagley Street£425 pcm+Fees
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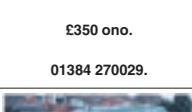
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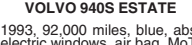
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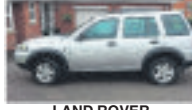
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Favourite pick-up now even better

By Graham Breeze

The world's favourite pick-up just got even better with Toyota revealing the stylish new Hilux – but the competition is improving too.

Hilux has been a dominant presence in the global pick-up market for nearly 50 years, recording global sales of over 16 million units, while in Europe some 34,000 models were sold in 2015 alone.

That represents a 23.1 per cent share of the market, making Hilux Europe's best-selling pick-up.

But canny bosses at Toyota have been quick to identify the competition sneaking up on the rails from the Mitsubishi L200, Nissan Navara, Volkswagen Amarok, Isuzu D-Max and Ssang Yong Korando and moved up another gear.

Capable

The latest Hilux is tougher, stronger and more capable off-road than ever before and heralds a new era for the pick-up, adding comfort, safety and advanced technology, hoping to fend off any pretenders to the throne.

Hilux proved it has all the quality, durability and reliability to succeed in this sector by achieving podium finishes in the 2016 Dakar Rally and is now available in single, extra and double cab body styles with a new and stronger ladder chassis, reinforced deck structure, enhanced 4x4 capabilities and improved towing capacity.

The double cab version on test came with a 2.4 litre D-4D engine and featured stop-start technology, six-speed automatic transmission, vastly improved torque delivery and generated 148bhp at 3,400rpm with class



Quality, durability and reliability leading fuel economy of 36.2mpg on the combined cycle.

The version was surprisingly quick too with a top speed of 106mph and 0-62mph in 12.8seconds.

At 5,335 mm long, 1,855 mm wide and 1,815 mm high, the new Hilux is 75 mm longer, 20 mm wider and 45 mm lower than its predecessor and really looks the part. A new upper-grille and headlamp design with a powerful looking bumper housing the large lower grille simply oozes toughness.

On the road this is a much smoother Hilux than the predecessor as Toyota look to cater for the needs of a diverse market. And they have succeeded because this model was equally at home on the motorway as it was on the lanes and tracks of Mid Wales.

Inside it would be easy to mistakenly think you were sitting in a Toyota saloon, with a



Hilux has been a dominant presence in the global pick-up market for nearly 50 years

stylish dash on the Invincible Double Cab model on test and stacks of information and technology on offer.

There was power steering, cruise control, reach and rake adjustable steering column, cooled glovebox, a multi-media system, Bluetooth connectivity, air conditioning, tip-up rear seats, cloth upholstery and a 4.2inch multi-information screen.

There are three trim levels at launch: entry-

level Active is single or extra cab only and aimed at the commercial vehicle market, while Icon is the cheapest double cab variant with a more upmarket look. Invincible and in particular Invincible X models gain a host of added luxuries.

Prices start at £19,177 for the Single Cab Active with a six-speed manual gearbox while the Invincible on test would set you back £32,645 or £27,251 if you get the VAT back.

The increased load space will prove popular with buyers but the added inches mean parking is even more difficult than before – though the reversing camera does provide extra security in those tight-squeeze situations.

The opposition for Hilux might well be growing and improving but it's hard to imagine the quality will grow to the levels of this Toyota.

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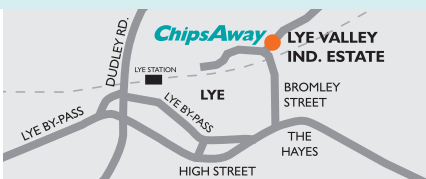
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Aston Martin launches the latest Vanquish, the 6.0 S



The new Vanquish S is one to watch on the road

Aston Martin's new Vanquish S has been launched and continues the progress of this illustrious model to keep it one to watch on the nation's roads. Both inside and out the looks and performance have been enhanced to make this driver's car a car to carry on driving.

The power of naturally-aspirated 6.0 litre V12 engine has been increased from 573 to 600PS thanks to a revised, freer-breathing intake system with larger volume inlet manifolds. The greater volume of air to flow into the engine at high revs creates a power delivery that powers the car all the way to the limits.

The suspension has been set-up to give a greater stability and precision to the drive. The damper internals, spring rates and anti-roll bar bushes have also been re-tuned to give the Vanquish S a keener edge in the more sporting suspension modes.

The exterior features a new aerodynamic package of exposed carbon fibre splitter and diffuser, plus striking new quad exhaust outlets that makes the looks of the Vanquish S flatteringly distinctive. The revised front

splitter and rear diffuser work together to give a significant reduction in frontal lift with a minimal penalty in additional drag. The striking new quad exhaust outlets enhances the rear of the car. The look can be personalised with a range of new options including carbon fibre bonnet louvres, new forged 5-spoke diamond turned wheels and a choice of striking painted graphics packs.

Dr. Andy Palmer, Aston Martin President & CEO said: "From the moment the original Vanquish was launched it became a modern icon. It propelled Aston Martin from an era of hand-built cars to one where craftsmanship and technology combined to create a new kind of great British GT."

"In its second generation the Vanquish maintained that momentum with huge engineering advances such as its all-carbon fibre bodywork and compelling, contemporary styling. Now, the Vanquish S takes things a step further, confidently asserting itself within the Aston Martin range and distinguishing itself from the new DB11."

Vanquish S is available in both Coupe and Volante and starts from £199,950 in the UK

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Popular and versatile SUV – 2008

By James Parker

The recently revised new Peugeot 2008 SUV that arrived in UK showrooms in the summer is in strong demand with over 40,000 existing UK customers and 500,000 produced since launch in 2013. The appetite for this model continues to rise, with sales in the first half of 2016 up 16 per cent, with 99,900 units sold worldwide.

The latest Peugeot 2008 SUV has recently been updated, with refreshed styling and featuring an enhanced specification.

Enhanced

It has an even more assertive and appealing SUV design, including visual features to give it an enhanced presence; new wheel arch extensions (from Allure level), while a new vertical front grille and front and rear scuff plates (also from Allure level) confirm its robustness and are designed for everyday use.

The new 'Ultimate Red' colour further epitomises the power and desirability of the new 2008 SUV.

The Access A/C, Active and Allure levels are complemented by the new 'GT Line' model. This desirable trim level is already a very popular choice on other key Peugeot models (108, 208, 308 and 508), and adds a sporty theme throughout.

The Peugeot i-Cockpit® is unique to the Brand and embodies the driving characteristics of the Peugeot 2008 SUV, being agile, intuitive and safe.

The compact sports steering wheel offers precise steering and improved



Refreshed styling and enhanced specification



Grip Control gives the 2008 its versatility on all terrain

manoeuvrability, while the 7" multifunction colour touch screen puts all the functionality at your fingertips.

In addition, the head-up instrument panel allows driver information to be accessed without taking the eyes off the road.

Grip Control – an adapted traction system –

gives the 2008 SUV its versatility on all types of terrain.

It is combined with Mud & Snow (All-Season) tyres.

Equipment available on new Peugeot 2008 SUV includes (subject to trim level) MirrorScreen, and Carplay®, along with the

It has an even more assertive and appealing SUV design including visual features to give it an enhanced presence

reversing camera, Active City Brake and Park Assist – a rarity in this segment.

The Euro6 engines ensure high-level driving pleasure while remaining fuel efficient.

Four versions are 'Best-in-Class' in their segment, including the 1.2L PureTech 130 S&S 6-speed manual.

Mark Pickles, UK marketing director at Peugeot, said: "The 2008 SUV is a distinctive and popular, practical choice with our customers, with 500,000 of them worldwide and with sales up 16 per cent in the first half of 2016. Our current retail offers bring increased appeal to an already captivating vehicle."



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Suzy Richards receives an award for Run for Joel, which was nominated again



Albion prospect Jonathan Leko was on the shortlist



Bethan Rees of Stafford Athletics Club was another up for the Aspiring Talent title

Sporting heroes listed for community awards

SPORTING FEATURE

By Matt Maher

"The standard is always high in the West Midlands Community Sport Awards, but this year it has been particularly difficult to select a shortlist."

through into the Baggies first team early last season. Stafford Athletics Club's javelin star Bethan Rees and Darlaston boxer Benjamin Whittaker were also among the nominees.

Nominated in the Community Club Award was Stourbridge-based Mums on the Run, a group which aims to get mothers active while raising money for charity. They were honoured at the Black Country Sport & Physical Activity Awards, which were presented by Olympic gymnast Kristian Thomas.

Also recognised is Run for Joel, a fundraising event held in the memory of Tunisia terror attack victim Joel Richards. Attracting more than 1,000 participants when it took place at Sandwell Valley Country Park in September, it has been nominated for the Community Project Award and was also honoured at the Black Country Sport & Physical Activity Awards. Cannock-based Real Girls were shortlisted for the same category.

Sally-Ann Chambers, head coach at Tipton-based Midrange Netball Club, was one of six nominees for community coach of the year. Akil Maylor, from Wolverhampton's Rise Up Yoga, was nominated in the Power of Sport Award, which recognises an individual

whose life has been significantly improved or changed thanks to a more active lifestyle.

The awards are organised by six county sports partnerships across the region. Chris Child, chairman of the WMCSA and chief executive of Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, said: "The standard is always high in the West Midlands Community Sport Awards, but this year it has been particularly difficult to select a shortlist."

"These awards are not just about recognising the best sporting talent – although there are some notable achievements across the finalists including Paralympic medals, national and world championships. Instead, they are designed to showcase the dedication and commitment shown by so many people in order to help make a difference through the power of sport."

"All of the finalists have already been named as winners in their own local County Sports Partnership awards and they can be incredibly proud to have made the final shortlist."

Nominees were: Community Club Award: Coundon Court FC, Ellesmere College Titans Swimming Club, Stourbridge Mums On The Run, Tamworth Boxing Club, Women's Boxing Club (Birmingham), Worcester Netball Club.

Community Project Award: Be Active (Telford), Big Birmingham Bikes, Engage! (Coventry), Run For Joel (Black Country), Real Girls (Cannock), The Core Skate (Hereford)

Community Coach of the Year: Alan Birch (Ellesmere College Titans Swimming Club), Sally-Ann Chambers (Midrange Netball Club, Tipton), Job King (Coventry Wheelchair Racing Club), Jason Lowe (Women's Boxing Club, Birmingham), David Rigby (Kingsgrove Cricket Club), Mark Stowe (Worcester Swimming Club).

Aspiring Talent Award: Jonathan Leko (West Bromwich Albion), Georgina Mitchell (Modern Pentathlete From Warwick), Rebecca Radford (Worcester Swimming Club), Bethan Rees (Stafford Athletics Club), Adam Summers (Astons Kickboxing Academy, Shrewsbury), Benjamin Whittaker (Firewalker Boxing Club, Darlaston).

Power of Sport Award: Liv Boucher (Run Like A Girl, Warwick), Darren Ford (Inclusively Fit Project), Youssef Khaira (O'Dell's Amateur Boxing Club, Birmingham), Akil Maylor (Rise Up Yoga, Wolverhampton), Ian Nash (Redditch Boxing Club).

BBC Midlands Sports Unsung Hero Award: Richard Brough (Handsworth Grammar School Old Boys Water Polo), David Finney (The Bridge Swimming Club, Redditch), Keith Hardy (Wyrley Juniors FC).



Unsung hero – Wyrley Juniors chairman Keith Hardy

A LONG-serving junior football club chairman and a teenage Premier League star were among the nominees for the West Midlands Community Sports Awards taking place this week.

Taking place at Villa Park last night (Wednesday), the awards were set up with the goal of recognising sports clubs, projects and individuals making a difference in their community.

The highlight was the BBC Midlands Sport Unsung Hero category with Keith Hardy, the chairman of Wyrley Juniors, one of three nominated for the prize.

Hardy was selected alongside Richard Brough, from Handsworth Grammar School Old Boys Water Polo and David Finney from Redditch's Bridge Swimming Club. The winner will be given the chance to win the national unsung hero prize at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year awards in Liverpool.

Formed in 1982, Wyrley Juniors are one of the biggest junior set-ups in the country, fielding more than 60 teams, both male and female, in a variety of age groups.

Recognition

Hardy has played a huge role in the club's success and is delighted to see the Juniors, who were the FA's Community Club of The Year in 2011, receive further recognition.

"I was shocked, first of all when I found out I had been nominated," he said. "And then pleasantly surprised. I am pleased because it is recognition for the club and what it has achieved over the past 30-odd years. No-one who is involved in grassroots football is in it for personal awards, it's all about the development of the kids and the club."

Albion striker Jonathan Leko was up for the Aspiring Talent Award. The 17-year-old, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, made his break-



Darlaston boxer Benjamin Whittaker was up for the Aspiring Talent award



Mums on the Run with Kristian Thomas at the Black Country Sport & Physical Activity Awards



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Glassboys put visitors to the sword

Stourbridge 5 Workington 0
SUPERB Stourbridge warmed up for the FA Cup clash with Northampton this weekend by putting five past Workington – with all goals coming in the first 27 minutes.

Dangerman Matt Dodd was at the heart of Stourbridge's early onslaught and soon made his presence felt when he cut inside Workington defender Gari Rowntree and was tripped as he raced through on goal.

Referee Sarah Garratt had no hesitation in pointing to the penalty spot and the league's leading marksman Luke Benbow duly slotted home.

Further chances went begging before Stourbridge made it 2-0 on 15 minutes. Dodd left three Workington players trailing in his wake before picking out Jordan Archer with a pinpoint cross to head home his first Glassboys goals.

It was 3-0 on 20 minutes when Jack Duggan headed Leon Broadhurst's free-kick against the underside of Workington's crossbar. The ball bounced down and was partially cleared straight back to Duggan who fired home at the second attempt.

The dynamic Dodd set up a fourth goal just three minutes later, cutting through a beleaguered defence and crossing for the unmarked Kayelden Brown to convert at the far post.

Stourbridge struck a fifth goal on 27 minutes when Broadhurst lobbed a sublime pass over Workington's defence for Benbow to bury home a spectacular goal with a first-time volley.

Stourbridge could have increased the lead further when Brown blazed wide on 52 minutes with only Workington goalkeeper Aaron Taylor to beat. Workington spurned the chance of a consolation goal when Rob Simpson shot meekly at Glassboys goalkeeper Matt Gould.

Boxing club at the double in regional competition finals

DUDLEY'S Priory Park Boxing Club will definitely have a double presence in the National Association of Boys and Girls Clubs Championships semi-finals.

The Priory Road gym got two out of three through the last of the West Midlands finals held at the Triumph Social Club in Coventry.

Former national champion James Mongan and club-mate Jee Johal face last four clashes at the Croxteth Leisure Centre in Liverpool on Saturday.

They both feature in Class A, for fighters born in 2001. Mongan is at 48kg, with Johal at 60kg.

However, another Priory Park fighter, Rahmatullah Sher, battled in vain against the useful Liam Hughes, from Exhall in Coventry, before going down on a split at 60kg in Class B (born 2000).

Ethan Collins, of Brooklands in Dudley, lost a box-off on a split at the regional semi-final stage on a split to Kaash Buttery, from Tom Lowe in Stoke-on-Trent.

Collins' Brooklands club-mate Paige Goodyear may have to go up to 66kg to take on Carlisle's Brodie Stephenson in a female Class B straight national final.

Stepping into ring to help friend



Reuben takes the gold medal at the World Cup

A KICKBOXER will step into the ring for the final time this year to help out a friend as a season of success draws to a close.

Reuben Charlesworth, of Lower Gornal, has won regional and national titles this year, as well as four world championships.

Aged 19, he travels around the world competing for his club, CMA Villains in Halesowen and recently won the World Cup in Romania.

He trains and teaches at the family martial arts centre and also gives back what he has learned over the years by tutoring at schools in Dudley and Sandwell. Reuben has just one competition

Boxing

left this year, which is this weekend. He has cancelled a scheduled bout in Poland on Sunday to line up in Birmingham instead for a charity event for a friend who has been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease.

All of CMA Villains will be competing along with many others clubs, who will putting on fights and exhibitions. Spectators are welcome at North Solihull Sports Centre, Chelmsley Wood, from 11am. Admission is £10 on the door or £25 to participate. Call 0121 770 3822.

Six-miler a real test of endurance

THERE were opportunities right on the doorstep for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club at the weekend with huge numbers travelling the short distance to Baggeridge Country Park for the Suicide 6. A colourfully named race organised by Action Heart, the cardiac charity based at Russell's Hall Hospital, over a six-mile course around Baggeridge down into Himley Park and back again, taking in some of the most testing features of both venues.

Within a mile of the start the course took competitors over the trig point, a brutally thigh shredding climb, before a stretch along the clay road sapping any remaining strength from already ruined legs.

Added to this another steep climb across a ridge behind Himley Hall and a waist deep water crossing to negotiate before climbing 111 steps before crossing the line, some in a heap.

Stuart Perkins was first home for the blue hoops in 40.43 taking 10th place, Dave Norman finished in 23rd in 42.57 chased over the line by Simon Hughes in 25th in 43.07.

Gary Bonner was 29th in 43.34, Mick Quane 47th in 44.28, Mark Homer was 53rd in 45.01, Stephen Parr finished 86th in 47.24, Sergej Lyubovnikov was 96th in 48.22 and Darren Marklew came home in 102nd in 48.41.

Andy Weaver came home in 49.47, Richard Tonks in 50.10, Rory Campbell in 51.26, John Sixsmith in 51.34, John Andrews in 53.06, Andy Morrison in 53.20, Karen Doy in 57.10, Malcolm Beddall in 1.00.57, Jane Campbell in 1.01.47, Lisa Kendrick in 1.02.25, Jan Burbie in 1.06.49 and Tony Noke in 1.06.51.

Amanda Hunt, Tracy Jones and Gina Collins all finished together in 1.10.28, Preston Grundy crossed the line in 1.12.34 and Chris Wood finished in 1.12.40.

It's Valentine's Day as visitors snatch it

Halesowen Town 1 Frickley Athletic 2
NATHAN Valentine broke Halesowen's hearts with Frickley's stunning injury time winner. But no-one could begrudge Frickley their vital three points as the struggling visitors created the better openings in a game low in quality.

Kuda Muskwe caused particular danger and he went close on four occasions.

Noel Burdett nipped in to snatch the lead for Frickley in the final seconds of the first half.

Katman Anderson headed Yeltz level in the 52nd minute before Valentine arrowed home a 25-yarder in the third minute of injury time.

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HALES BACK IN CONTENTION

Bridgnorth 11 Old Halesonians 22
HALES first team squad travelled to Bridgnorth looking for a much needed win to re-establish themselves in the league.

The opening 20 minutes was mainly dominated by Bridgnorth and the young fit home side tested the Hales defence. Four penalties were conceded, two of them converted, and Bridgnorth led 6-0.

After 20 minutes, Hales fly half Ian Briggs left the field on a yellow card as the referee penalised him for a deliberate knock on. Hales had to dig in to gain control and they were back in contention as Carl Robinson sprinted in for an unconverted try. This gave the visitors the lift they needed and strong running again turned the tide.

Ben Barkley constantly made ground into the home defence. He passed to Robinson, to Adam Clayton on the left flank who in turn fed wing Jay Reid and he powered through his opposite number for a try out wide. Chris Hooper took the difficult touchline conversion and slotted between the posts for a 12-6 lead.

Slipped

Director of Rugby Gary Cox and head coach Ben Hughes rallied the players to maintain the momentum for the second period.

They did just that and the lead was extended early in the second half. The forwards drove again and the ball was slipped inside to Reid gliding through the defence. He fed scrum half Chris Danks to Hooper to tight head prop Richard Taylor who crossed the line for a great team try, converted by Hooper.

Hales were reduced in numbers again with Clayton receiving a yellow card for pulling down in the line out. The visitors made changes, Rob Butler on at prop for Matt Young, Luke Irwin on for Clayton and Jamie Keen on at scrum half for Danks. More pressure by the returning Briggs supported by Neil Mason and Kieran Haynes forced a penalty by Bridgnorth, converted by Hooper. Hales were in command of the game at this stage although the home side pinched a well-deserved try to pull the score back.

Hales host Broadstreet on Saturday at 2.15pm.

U-16s overturn neighbours



The Halesonians u-16s squad, who are in impressive form and beat Stourport 87-5

Stourport RFC 5 Old Halesonians u-16s 87
HALES helped out their hosts by loaning the depleted neighbours three players for the first game between the two sides.

Hales are in good form and made an immediate impact with a fourth minute Louis Prosser try. They went on to build up a substantial lead as Aiden Wilbey, Alessi Knight, Jack Law, Oscar Crowcombe, Will Hymer and Jacob Saul took the half-time tally to 53-0.

Stourport played well, they had a brave pack that ran the ball into a strong Old Hales defensive line and their backs showed some pace, but

they did make some handling errors and Old Hales were able to secure turnover ball again and again.

Old Hales forward Mike Essex was next on the scoresheet, but he was playing for Stourport and scored their only try.

Jacob Saul was rewarded with a couple more impressive tries, Tom King and Jack Law were gaining points from the conversion kicks, Will Ford discovered that he could use his size and speed to great effect in driving the opposition off in the ruck and Charlie Adams made a super run to score an impressive try.

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